

1943-1945

Ted Grant

**Trotskyism**  
and the  
**Second World War**



Writings  
Volume Two



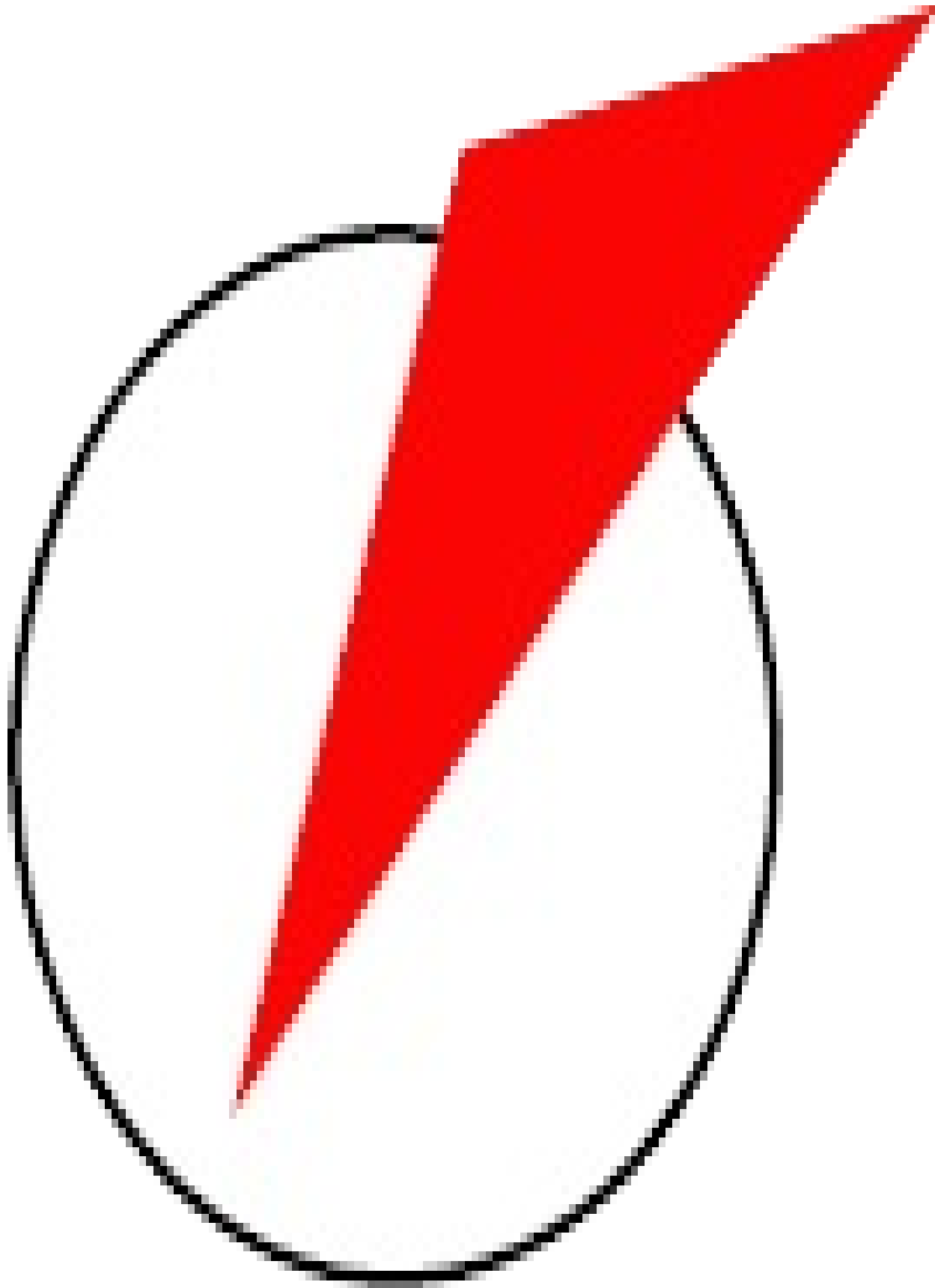
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*Ted Grant Writings: Volume Two*

Trotskyism and the Second World War (1943-1945)

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## Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

The scope and depth of Ted Grant's writings are a testament to his profound understanding of Marxism. The first volume of his writings covered the period just prior the war, the first three years of the imperialist war, the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, the formation of the Workers' International League, and the beginnings of industrial unrest during the war. These writings during this period, following the death of Trotsky, mark Ted's ascendancy as the Trotskyist movement's main theoretician.

In August 1942, the Workers' International League issued a perspectives document, called Preparing for power, written by Ted, which served to direct the attention of the young forces of the WIL to the revolutionary tasks of the time. "The possibility exists for an unprecedented growth in influence and numbers in the shortest possible time. Today the problem consists mainly in preparing the basis for a rapid increase in growth and influence", stated the document.

While armchair critics scoffed at this "wild" perspective, the question of posing a struggle for power was bound up with the perspectives of war producing a revolutionary wave. This is what Trotsky had explained. "This perspective must be made the basis of our agitation", stated Trotsky. "It is not merely a question of a position on capitalist militarism and of renouncing the defence of the bourgeois state, but of directly preparing for the conquest of power and the defence of the proletarian fatherland." (Writings, 1939-41, p.414)

This second volume, starting at the beginning of 1943, takes us over the next three years of the Second World War. In January 1943, the editorial in Socialist Appeal assesses the situation and concludes:

“The lessons of the recent period of history in one country after another can be focused on the same point – that there was in these countries no closely knit and soundly built party with a firm policy ready to lead the masses at the critical hour to the taking of power. ‘Popular Fronts,’ ‘national unity,’ every sort of unprincipled amalgamation: but never a genuine workers’ party prepared to take power, and with a programme that could win the masses.

“WIL sets itself the task of building such a party. The programme is no dead set of rules and tenets but a live instrument of power which responds to the changing situation, though never losing its firm Marxist foundation. The nucleus of the party is already formed, and as it grows it turns outwards more and more towards broader circles of the workers.

“The first stage of the struggle for a party is over. WIL has left the narrow discussion circles which are an inevitable stage on the way towards the building of a fresh movement and leadership, and is already taking its place on the actual field of battle. WIL now places itself directly before the workers and offers its programme as the only solution to their problems.

“A year is just beginning. It will see mighty events and portentous changes both on the international scene and on the field of the class struggle at home. Those events will sharpen and crystallise the moods and demands among the British workers. They will impress on the workers more and more the iron necessity for an independent class policy. It is the historic task of the fourth internationalists in Britain to provide that policy and to build up the party that will lead the way to its successful application. It is on this road that there lies the true continuation of British labour’s militant past.”

The military conflagration in the Second World War had shifted to the eastern front where the Russians were facing 176 enemy divisions, and the conflict was evolving into a struggle between the Soviet Union and Hitler’s Germany. “The workers are awaiting with bated breath on the outcome of the Battle of

Stalingrad”, explained the Socialist Appeal of October 1942.

“Lieutenant General Diethmar, the German military spokesman, said over the Berlin radio: ‘No other enemy can extend or postpone decisions as the Russians. Over and over again they succeed in balancing the scales by the sheer force of their masses.’

“The Russian workers and peasants are pouring out their blood unstintingly in defence of their cities. The same Nazi spokesman stated: ‘The Soviet soldier is far more strongly attached than any soldier to the system in which he finds himself.’ The system, for which the Soviet masses are grimly giving their lives, is based upon the gains of the October revolution. The tradition of the great Russian revolution has given the Russian workers and peasants something worth fighting for – something so vital and so important that it must be defended at all costs. The socialised property and the collective ownership of the means of production and distribution are what gives the heroic defenders of Stalingrad the courage and tenacity which is amazing the world.”

The article continues:

“While the Bolshevik and Nazi armies are locked in colossal struggle, British and American imperialism sit like vultures watching their prey bleed to death. Commenting on the failure to open the Second Front the Frankfurter Zeitung of September 24th states: ‘British interests are best served if as many Germans and Bolsheviks as possible mutually kill each other.’ Britain and America are content to watch both their ‘enemy’ and their ‘ally’ destroy each other. When the destruction has sufficiently weakened both Germany and Russia, they hope to step in and take control.”

During 1943, the regime of Mussolini fell and the dictator’s bloody body was



publicly hung upside down alongside his girlfriend in the centre of Milan. The authorities rushed to replace him by Marshal Badoglio, described by Ted as the Italian Petain, and King Victor Emmanuel III, in a desperate attempt to shore up capitalism and prevent revolution. Ted analyses this turn of events and explained that this marked “the beginning of the revolutionary upsurge in all the countries of Europe.” Soviets appeared in the northern industrial cities and the masses poured onto the streets. This was certainly the beginning of the Italian revolution.

The news of events in Italy provoked a letter to Socialist Appeal from Andy Scott, a Central Committee comrade who had been drafted into the army in the summer of 1943. Scott was his pen name; his real name was private Andy Paton. “The Italian events are just the beginning – and what a beginning!” he wrote. “Soviets with a few days, after 20 years of bloody repression, and in spite of every brand of treacherous leadership” (Socialist Appeal, Mid-September 1943).

Soon afterward, Stalin rushed to recognise the regime of Badoglio and the King, propped up by the bayonets of Anglo-American imperialism.

In May 1943, Stalin had dissolved the Communist International as a gesture to the Allies. In response, the Workers’ International League rushed out a statement by Ted Grant in the Workers’ International News entitled The rise and fall of the Communist International, directed at the rank and file of the Communist Party.

Stalingrad had proved to be a turning point in the war. The defeat of the German advance was turned into a massive counter-offensive. The Soviet military, backed by the resources of the planned economy, proved to be decisive in this massive reversal of fortunes and the driving back of the German armies. The WIL tracked the different stages of the war and closely monitored the prospects for a revolutionary upsurge, as Trotsky had predicted.

The war in Europe had meant that the only openly functioning section of the Fourth International was in Britain. From the smallest grouping in 1938, by 1943 the Workers' International League had become the most developed Trotskyist force in Europe with around 300 members rooted in the working class. Although the WIL had not been recognised as the official section of the Fourth International since 1938, its correct policies and orientation allowed it to completely overshadow the official group, the Revolutionary Socialist League, which had dwindled to almost nothing with some 23 members. Their paper ceased to appear along with their ever-declining activity.

While the WIL adopted and carried into practice the Proletarian Military Policy of Trotsky, the RSL repudiated this “defensive” policy in 1940 and adopted both an ultra-left and opportunist-pacifist position. “The British Section, therefore, states that the demand in the international manifesto [War and the world proletarian revolution] has no validity in the existing conditions in this country...” explained a statement from the RSL. Instead they counter-posed the pacifist slogan of “peace” and “stop the war”.

The Fourth International was completely opposed to the imperialist war, but as Ted explained in his polemic with the RSL, under the concrete conditions it was wrong to repeat word for word Lenin's position from 1914. At this time, Lenin was addressing the cadres and drawing a sharp line between defencism and internationalism. It was necessary to connect the revolutionary tendency with a war against fascism, but without giving credence to the war aims of British imperialism. Within this volume is contained the debate between the two positions. The WIL's main statement, written by Ted, remains a classic document on this important question.

The RSL was not the only party of the Fourth International that failed to understand or rejected the Proletarian Military Policy. In fact, it provoked widespread opposition. Like the RSL, who repudiated the policy, the Belgian section struck out several paragraphs on this question from their clandestine version of the May 1940 Manifesto. There was also opposition in the French

section, which was moving in opposite directions, and even in the European Secretariat, which was supposed to be guiding the work. Even in the United States, the policy was reduced to mere propaganda. (See Pierre Broué, *How Trotsky and the Trotskyists confronted the Second World War*, September 1985) Only in Britain, did the WIL take the policy into the working class and armed forces in the widest possible manner.

Given their dominant position and growing success, the WIL opened up friendly relations and correspondence with the International with a view to becoming the officially recognised section. The International Secretariat of the Fourth International in fact criticised the RSL for attacking the WIL as “centrist”, “chauvinist”, etc. “The impression of the WIL’s leadership we have here is that these are young comrades. If we could desire, at times, a little more firmness in their propaganda, we must recognise that they learn quickly. The last issue of their paper (that of May, with the article on the Second Front) is excellent, and to speak of “centrism”, “defencism”, “chauvinism”, etc., is simply false. It is necessary to say clearly: The WIL stands entirely on the grounds of the principles and methods of the FI and it should find its place in our ranks as soon as possible.” (Letter from the IS to RSL, June 21 1942, emphasis in original)

Despite the patronising tone at the beginning, the International Secretariat could not but criticise the RSL for its policies and groundless attacks. As we will see the RSL was in a state of acute crisis, riddled with factions, and in the process of complete disintegration prior to the 1944 fusion with the WIL. Just like a French bedroom farce, the minority leaders actually expelled the majority! This was revealed in a resolution of the IS of September 26 1943:

“1) The IS has now received adequate reports and statements from all concerned regarding the wholesale expulsion carried out by the DDH [Denzil Harber] leadership and its handling of the question of fusion with the WIL...

“2) The Central Committee of DDH has, by a series of impermissible and

unheard-of bureaucratic manipulations, finally managed to ‘expel’ a majority of the organisation. These fantastic operations have been carried through in gross violation of the elementary rules and methods and traditional practices of the FI, and despite repeated warnings and demands of the IS. The CC has likewise disloyally sabotaged the policy of the IS regarding fusion with the WIL – a matter now of the greatest international urgency which can no longer be trifled with.

“3) By its actions the CC of DDH has forfeited all rights to be considered the leadership of the British Section of the Fourth International, and is no longer so regarded by the IS. It no longer has the right or moral authority to expel or reinstate anybody. The CC of DDH represents a minority fraction no more, and has no special rights or authority whatsoever.

“4) The IS has received the statement signed by Dunipace, Lawrence and Robinson in the name of the groups they represent which make up the majority of the membership, proposing to call a national conference to reconstitute the RSL as the official BSFI. We endorse this move as the most necessary action in the present situation, with the following proviso: The DDH group must be invited to participate in the conference and its arrangements committee on the same basis as other groups.”

In 1943, one of the factions within the crisis-ridden RSL, called the Trotskyist Opposition and led by John Lawrence, had opened up secret talks with the WIL. Eventually, after the RSL had reconstituted itself from the ashes, a hasty fusion conference was organised with the WIL in March 1944, where the Revolutionary Communist Party was formed and recognised as the official section of the Fourth.

With the political truce and the pro-war stand of the Communist Party, the WIL had concentrated its attention on the industrial field. At this time the Socialist Appeal is full of reports of industrial disputes. The resolution on the industrial

situation presented to the 1943 WIL national conference explained that the previous year has seen the largest number of strikes for 16 years, and the first 5 months of 1943 had seen a 150 percent rise in the number of disputes compared to the same period of 1942. Clearly, this indicated a rising discontent within the workers in industry, which the Stalinists were attempting to suppress in support of the war effort. Worried at the growing effect of the Trotskyists, the British Communist Party launched a frenzied attack on members of the WIL, denouncing them as “Hitler’s agents”, and when discovered were to be treated accordingly.

To advance their work, and undermine the influence of the Communist Party, the WIL established the Militant Workers’ Federation in 1943. Roy Tearse was appointed the WIL’s industrial organiser and became the secretary of the MWF. The comrades threw themselves into the strike movement, the most significant being the Barrow-in-Furness strike, which the trade union bureaucracy and the Stalinists opposed. The influence of the MWF extended to the shop stewards in the Glasgow munitions factory at Fairfields and more decisively to the Nottingham Royal Ordnance Factory, where the convenor had joined the WIL.

The Stalinists were livid. In October 1943, Harry Pollitt, the CP leader, wrote after the great Barrow dispute: “We oppose strikes at the present time because they are against the present and future interests of the working class; and because existing trade union machinery, if rightly used, and backed by public opinion, can bring results satisfactory to the workers without dislocating the productive process.” This was also the line of the capitalist press and politicians.

The Stalinists advocated a “strong government” of Tories, Liberals and Labour. Their hatred of the Trotskyists also extended itself to the centrist Independent Labour Party. The ILP’s demand for “replacing the Churchill government by a Socialist government” was, according to the Stalinist J. R. Campbell, “black treachery”. “Restricted practices”, he continued, “are a relic of craft unionism”, and “whether we like it or not, we are in for vast changes in industry, which cannot be met by clinging to old customs and practices.”

Harry Pollitt, the leading Stalinist, claimed that “it is the class conscious workers in Britain, inspired by the Communist Party, who have led the fight for increased production and to make the Joint Production Committees work, have been ready to accept dilution, forego hard-earned customs and practices in industry.”

Workers, however, had other ideas. Resentment was growing and was reflected in the increasing number of industrial disputes. In the autumn of 1943, workers at the Vickers Armstrong factory in Barrow took action, which resulted in the union executive suspending the whole of the Barrow District Committee of the AEU. “Barrow has become the cockpit of Trotskyist agitation”, ranted Jack Owen in the Daily Worker, as they campaigned for a return to work.

Strikes spread to other areas, including the Kent coalfield, Fife, Doncaster, and South Wales, where 100,000 were out on strike. Anger was fed in July 1943, when the government announced the “Bevin Ballot Scheme”, in which young workers were removed from their jobs and forced to work in the mines on lower pay.

In October, the WIL held its Second National Conference attended by over 100 members, with 34 delegates, with firm roots in the working class. “Striking too was the number of newcomers fresh from the ranks of the Communist Party”, stated the report by Millie Lee in Socialist Appeal. Comrades attended the conference from all branches of the armed forces. The three statements discussed were on Perspectives, the relations with the Fourth International and Industrial Policy. The report on the WIL witnessed a 40 percent growth in membership over the previous year and established the WIL as a truly national organisation. There was enormous enthusiasm and sacrifice shown in the future building and success of the party. It was a tremendous fitting reply to the press witch-hunt led by Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, and the Daily Mail.



In March 1944, 5,000 apprentices went on strike on Tyneside against being conscripted to work in the mines and this quickly spread to other areas, including the Clyde. Welsh miners also went on strike. This movement coincided with the launch of the Revolutionary Communist Party on 12-13 March. As the Socialist Appeal put it: “Whilst 100,000 Welsh miners were demonstrating a wonderful class spirit and solidarity in the great Welsh coal strike, another important event was taking place in London. The Trotskyists were meeting in London for two days for the purpose of fusing together the hitherto separate organisations: the Revolutionary Socialist League and Workers’ International League, into one united Trotskyist party for Great Britain.” The event was attended by 69 delegates as well as a host of visitors. The name of the new party was to draw a sharp distinction between it and His Majesty’s Communist Party which supported the imperialist war and tied the workers to the Coalition government. It was to be the Revolutionary Communist Party.

It must be said that the new organisation was hardly a “fusion”, but represented in reality a complete takeover by the WIL. The RCP adopted lock, stock and barrel the programme, perspectives and methods of the Workers’ International League.

During the conference, the representative of the IS met with the old faction leaders of the RSL and with Gerry Healy established a new secret “anti-leadership” faction inside the RCP. James Cannon, the leader of the American Trotskyists, had always held a grudge against the leaders of the WIL ever since they refused to enter the unprincipled fusion of 1938. He was interested in replacing the RCP leaders by using Zinovievite organisational methods. A key ally in this conspiracy was Gerry Healy, who had been expelled from the WIL in February 1943 after walking out. From then on he established factional relations with John Lawrence in the RSL and wheedled his way back into the WIL. This was the beginning of a factional career that was to eventually destroy the movement.

During this time, the Trotskyists were active in supporting the apprentices’

strike, and managed to win over the strike leader, Bill Davy, to the movement. The capitalist press led a hue and cry over “trained agitators” and “fanatical adherents of Trotskyism” who were “doing all they can to foment class warfare” (Daily Mail).

The Mail continued its barrage, when on April 6 1944 it announced a “special team of investigators” to track down the Trotskyists. The Special Branch, according to the paper, was “in search of documents that would reveal the hidden hand of finance” and was following “a fantastic trail of clues.”

The Sunday Dispatch on 9 April explained: “Strikes are being fomented by agitators belonging to the organisations calling themselves the ‘Militant Workers’ Federation’ and the ‘Revolutionary Communist Party’ in connection with which is published and distributed the Socialist Appeal ... those behind the Socialist Appeal – the writers on the paper and the agitators who foment trouble among the miners – are Trotskyists who believe in permanent revolution.”

Even Britain’s foremost cartoonist “Low” joined in the “nasty man” campaign by drawing a cartoon of a sinister Trotskyist piper leading a bunch of blindfolded youngsters labelled “strike suckers”. As Jock Haston commented in the Socialist Appeal: “Yes Low, they are suckers all right. Suckers to dig, to sweat, to fight, to die so that your employers might profit and you can throw mud at them; for which you get paid a little bit more than the lads who will dig coal in the mine.”

The authorities were so alarmed that they moved in to arrest four RCP comrades, Roy Tearse, Heaton Lee, Ann Keen and later Jock Haston. They were accused of conspiring to act in furtherance of an illegal strike; acting in furtherance of an illegal strike; inciting others to act in furtherance of an illegal strike; and aiding and abetting William Davy (the 19-year old apprentice and secretary of the Tyne Apprentices’ Guild) and others to act in furtherance of an illegal strike.

The headquarters of the RCP was also raided along with members' homes. The Stalinists, who attempted to demoralise the apprentices by accusing them of being manipulated by pro-Nazi elements, applauded these actions. These arrests, however, were met by protests, including ILP leader James Maxton, who became head of the defence committee. The issue was also raised in Parliament, and eventually, after a successful campaign, the sentences were quashed at the end of September and the comrades released. "The whole thing is disgraceful", declared Nye Bevan in the House of Commons.

In mid-1944, a revolutionary movement broke out in Greece. The entire population was involved in armed resistance. There had been a general strike in Athens against the execution of hostages by the occupying power a year earlier. The main organisation engaged in the resistance armed struggle was EAM (and its army ELAS). EAM was a broad mass movement, under the control of the Stalinists, which conducted the struggle against the fascists. As expected, the British government was fully behind the Monarchist forces, and supplied it with arms. However, the leaders of EAM entered the reactionary Greek exile government of Papandreou, and made all kinds of political concessions.

When the Germans were forced to leave Athens in October 1944, the CP called on the Greek people to "ensure public order". It also ensured the Papandreou government came to power accompanied by British troops. The government proceeded to disarm ELAS, but this provoked armed resistance and an uprising. The ranks of ELAS took up the fight in Athens, Salonika and elsewhere as power passed into the hands of the working class.

By the end of the year, under orders from Churchill, British troops were used alongside Greek reactionaries to put down the Greek workers "to prevent a massacre" and to stop "triumphant Trotskyism". "British imperialism has intervened with tanks, machine guns, and planes against the popular democratic will of the people", explained the Socialist Appeal (Mid-December 1944). In this Churchill had the full backing of Stalin who believed the British should have a

free hand. Eventually, the uprising was put down. Nevertheless, it would require several more years of betrayal at the hands of the Stalinists before the fighting spirit of the Greek revolution was extinguished.

In August 1944, there was a massive movement in France against the German occupation, led by an insurrection in Paris. “Barricades were set up in all the working class districts of Paris and tens of thousands, armed with revolvers, sticks and rifles were joined on the barricades by hundreds of thousands without arms”, explained Ted Grant in the lead article of the Socialist Appeal (September 1944). The Germans, despite having tanks, were completely defeated. It was a situation of dual power, with many factories in the hands of the workers. Out of fear of the revolutionary masses, de Gaulle was rushed in to head the movement and quickly make a truce with the Nazis. With the retreat of the Germans, the task of de Gaulle was to disarm the workers and, with the help of the Stalinists, to derail the revolution.

“The political general staff of capitalism, especially men like Churchill, have assimilated the lessons of the last world war”, stated the Socialist Appeal.

“It was ended by the Russian revolution, revolutions in Germany, Austria-Hungary and other countries and a revolutionary situation in Italy, France and even Britain. The masses, who had paid the price in blood and suffering while their masters made millions out of the slaughter and hunger, demanded a reckoning for the crimes of capitalism. The capitalist spokesmen have been haunted throughout this war by the fear of the repetition of these events.” (Mid-December 1944)

Such events were sweeping France and Greece and were part of a wider revolutionary wave that was sweeping across Europe, as Leon Trotsky had predicted before the war.

Unfortunately, the Trotskyists were too small to take advantage of the situation, which was hijacked by the Stalinists and social democrats. They deliberately set about betraying this movement and were in the forefront in disarming the resistance. They also waged the most vulgar campaign of chauvinism by blaming the German workers for the crimes of Hitler and demanded they pay the price. The actions of these “leaders” were to derail the revolution into the safe channels of protecting private property. It was a period of “counter-revolution in a democratic form.”

In January 1945, the RCP decided to fight the Neath by-election. This was the first time a British Trotskyist party had ever contested a parliamentary election.

The January edition of the Socialist Appeal boldly declared:

“In the whole course of the war, not a single election has been fought wherein a direct revolutionary appeal has been made to the electorate. The Revolutionary Communist Party will make this election a test of the real feelings in the ranks of the working class. Our candidate will fight on a platform of uncompromising hostility to the imperialist, war, for the breaking of the coalition, for the overthrow of the Churchill government and for Labour to power on a socialist programme...

“The Trotskyist candidate will fight the election on the basis of international socialism; he will conduct his fight in the traditions of the great socialist teachers of our time – Marx, Lenin, Liebknecht and Trotsky. For the overthrow and destruction of Nazism as well as the monarchist and capitalist quislings and governments set up by Anglo-American imperialism in “liberated” territories. Land to the peasants and factories to the workers throughout Europe and the world! Not the military domination of Europe by the Allied imperialist armies but a united socialist states of Europe. In particular he will appeal for a hand of friendship and fraternity to the German working class for the overthrow of Hitler and the establishment of the socialist brotherhood of European nations – against

Vansittartism – against reparations, against blockade and revenge on the German working class.”

The writs were delayed and the election was not held until 15 May 1945, not long before the war was over in Europe. While the RCP never expected to win the seat, the election campaign was used to establish a base within the South Wales coalfield. This was considered fertile ground. Two-thirds of all strikes were concentrated in the British coalfield, a significant number in South Wales.

This immediately caused a ferocious reaction from the Stalinists. “There are only a few scattered Trotskyists in the Welsh coalfields”, explained a statement from the South Wales Communist Party. “They have no real influence in the miners’ Lodges, but the genuine grievances over the Porter Award ... gave the Trotskyists their chance to exploit the strike for their own ends, and to slander the elected leaders of the miners, especially Arthur Horner, the President.”

There was talk that the left-wing Miners’ Agent, Trevor James, would be put forward as an independent Communist, well-known for his anti-war, anti-Stalinist views. James’ refusal gave the opportunity for the RCP to wage the challenge. Neath was a rock solid Labour seat and therefore there was no chance of splitting the vote and handing victory to an anti-Labour candidate.

The campaign was a marvellous affair. Thousands of copies of Socialist Appeal were sold throughout the constituency. In fact the February issue sold 7,500 copies, approximately one to every three houses. Two mass meetings were held in the Gwyn Hall, the first attracting 750 people, and the second attracting 1,500. The latter was the biggest political rally in Neath since Ramsay MacDonald held a rally in the same place in the 1929 General Election.

In the final rally, the CP was forced to debate. Councillor Alun Thomas,



chairman of the West Wales CP debated Jock Haston. As expected, he raised all the old Stalinist slanders. “He tried to get the miners out on strike everywhere when we were preparing for invasion”, stated Thomas. “His policy was the same as Oswald Mosley, both parts of one and the same policy.

“He comes out against unconditional surrender. Says the German worker is our ally. How can the Russians, who tried to fraternise with the Germans and get them to mutiny, talk about these elements as brothers? Hitler has created a nation of nincompoops and murderers. Haston had to follow in Hitler’s footsteps.”

Haston, however, was a skilled debater and took up every point that Thomas had raised and then turned the tables on the Stalinists for their class collaboration and the betrayals of Stalin.

On Election Day, the RCP candidate, Jock Haston, secured 1,781 votes, a credible achievement under the circumstances. The Labour candidate scored 30,847. The war was almost at an end and workers were looking forward to a General Election to return a majority Labour government.

“In 1929, in the height of the depression Harry Pollitt, contesting Seaham Harbour against Ramsay MacDonald polled 1,451 votes against 35,615”, explained the Socialist Appeal. “In 1940 at the Silvertown by-election Pollitt received 996 votes on an anti-war ticket against Labour’s 14,343. In comparison with these figures, the result of the first election which our party has contested should be an encouragement and inspiration to the workers seeking a communist solution.” (Mid-May 1945)

The issue concluded that “Trotskyism has found its roots in Wales. But its richest harvest will be reaped in the years to come.”

Nationally, the organisation report at the second National Conference stated that the membership of the RCP had grown by 20 percent since the fusion. The organisation was in a healthy position to face up to the opportunities of the post war period.

Throughout these past three years, the theoretical and political line of the WIL and RCP was largely determined by Ted Grant, which can be seen from this written work. He drafted most of the main documents and statements of the party. The final important statement contained in this collection is The changed relationship of forces in Europe and the role of the Fourth International, which was presented by Ted to the March 1945 Central Committee, and later approved in the August National Conference. This was especially important, and while it was necessarily conditional about developments in those countries occupied by the Red Army, it nevertheless raises the possibility of the overturn of property forms being carried through by the Stalinists, albeit on a totalitarian basis.

More importantly, for the first time it is recognised that a developing stabilisation was unfolding in Europe as a consequence of the role of the leaders of the mass organisations. This development was to take the appearance of a “counter-revolution in a ‘democratic’ form”. It was counter-revolutionary in so far as the ruling class could ride out the revolutionary storm given the weakness of the subjective factor, i.e., the revolutionary party, but “democratic” because of the weakness of reaction and the pressure of the masses. What is also explained is the political preconditions for a new economic recovery of capitalism, a new departure from the traditional perspective of the past. It was this ability of Ted to grasp the new conditions in order to reorient the forces of Trotskyism, which the leaders of the Fourth International were incapable of doing.

This inability of the International leadership to recognise reality led to enormous problems in the years ahead. However, that is the subject on the next volume of Ted Grant’s writings.

*Rob Sewell, May 2012*

## **1. War and revolution**

# **Aid Red Army with Lenin's weapon**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 8, April 1943]

The winter is nearly over in Russia, and now is the time to draw a balance sheet of the successes of the Red Army, and of the war.

The capitalist press has been lavish in its praise of the tremendous achievements of the Soviet Union and its army. It is clear that had the Nazi invaders been faced with the old Tsarist army, they would have swept into Asia long ago. But the matchless spirit and hatred of the imperialist invader – who brings not only national oppression, but the restoration of the capitalists and the landlords, whom the peoples of the Soviet Union have overthrown – have led to this unsurpassed resistance.

The material preponderance of Germany, armed with a far superior technique and industrial structure and basing herself on the resources of the whole of Europe, has not been sufficient to offset the enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of the masses of the Soviet Union. Armed with a planned and organised economy the Soviet Union has stood the test.

But imperialist Germany is wreaking a terrible revenge on the masses in Russia for their resistance. And without the support of the masses of all nationalities the Soviet Union would have collapsed long ago. The Daily Telegraph reveals how

in the battle of the Donetz, the peasants supported the Red Army though armed only with knives, pickaxes and shovels.

Russia is bleeding from every pore. The losses in this most terrible war must be the greatest in all history[1]. The Red Army's advance is unparalleled in history but the German army is still almost intact and has not been destroyed.

The principal reason for this is not far to seek. The just hatred of the Soviet masses of the imperialist invader has been deliberately distorted and misdirected into a hatred, not of the capitalists and their Nazi agents, but of the German rank and file, of all Germans as such. The whole propaganda to the Russian masses by the Stalin government has been of an incredibly revolting nationalist and chauvinist character. Soviet War News every week prints pages of this disgusting stuff. On the wireless, in the cinemas, and in the newspapers, all are filled with a racial hatred which could compare with that of Goebbels. To cite one or two examples. Alexei Tolstoy, writing in Soviet War News of February 13 1943, in an article entitled Tough guys, thick heads:

“The Hitlerite army is held together by German training and discipline and German thick-headedness. The German soldier still has plenty of this. The Red Army will have to exert no little effort and deliver not a few blows to make the Germans whine like curs. But they soon will whine, make no mistake, because the Red Army has become really angry.”

D. Manuilsky, one of the leaders of the so-called Communist International, writes in Soviet War News, February 8 1943, in an article entitled Hitler's accursed generation:

“At Stalingrad, Hitler deceived his men. But let us admit frankly that they were deceived because they wanted to be deceived, because his lies correspond to the



mentality bred in them by a whole lifetime of lies and deceit. They are slaves deprived of rights, without individual minds; slaves accustomed to complete subordination.

“Hitler promised to make them masters of the earth. He stole scraps of reactionary ideology from every quarter in order to justify the greedy desires of German imperialism, and poisoned the psychology of the young German generation so that they became a demoralised gang of plunderers and murderers.

“This generation, unscrupulous and brutal, is merely robbing other peoples’ countries. With cold cruelty it is exterminating the inhabitants of occupied lands.

“Hitler has created an accursed generation of moral cripples which brings humanity nothing but devastation, death and destruction. The Hitlerite is brave when he has a rifle and faces a defenceless person. He is ready to commit the meanest, most incredible crimes if he is sure he will not be punished...”

And Manuilsky ends his article:

“...they will understand how terrible is the responsibility with which they have saddled eighty million Germans.”

Here is the reason for the resistance of the German army. Hitler tells them that the war is a struggle for national survival and the propaganda of the Stalinists serves only to back him up. If the war remains a purely military struggle there is no reason why it should not continue for years. Churchill’s estimate of a long war is based on this consideration. The Anglo-American imperialists intend cutting Germany to pieces and oppressing the German people like the Nazis

themselves have oppressed other peoples in Europe.

The allied imperialists look with not an unfavourable eye on the fact that the Soviet Union is compelled to bear the brunt of the war. And indeed, has this not always been the policy of all imperialists, to simultaneously weaken their “allies” while using them to deal blows against their enemies? The Daily Worker of March 23 quotes Eugene Tarle, the Russian historian who demonstrates historically this policy, on the part of British imperialism, in the Napoleonic war against Tsarism:

“What the British opposition publicist Cobbett said much later about Lord Castlereagh applies to many European statesmen of that time. Cobbett said: ‘In 1812 My Lord desired with equal ardour two things – firstly, Russian victory over Napoleon and, secondly, that this victory should not come to the Russians too soon.’ ”

The Daily Worker columnist comments:

“And have we not also some Castlereaghs today?”

But of course, the Stalinists refuse to draw the conclusions from this. The policy of British imperialism in the last war, while fighting to defeat Germany, was to systematically weaken their “dear ally” Tsarist Russia. How much more so must this inevitably be the policy today when they are faced not with a feudal-capitalist state, but a workers’ state (even if somewhat degenerated).

If the war continues on the present basis, the Soviet Union will emerge from the struggle weakened and shaken. It will be greatly dependent on the good will of

the Allies. They are collecting huge resources in men and material which would be comparatively fresh, while coldly calculating to the last ounce and the last minute the resistance of the Soviet Union.

The heroism of the Russian workers and soldiers, despite material handicaps, has been sufficient to save the Soviet Union from military defeat. But even this is not sufficient to save the Soviet Union from world imperialism. Stalin's nominating of himself as a Marshall is a significant indication that the military generals and the officer caste have taken control in the Soviet Union. They will lean more and more in the direction of Anglo-American imperialism. "Victory" under such conditions would not be a safeguard against the imperialist pressure to re-introduce capitalism into Russia. Taking advantage of Russia's weakness the capitalists would take advantage of her need for machinery and materials – even food – as a weapon against collective ownership.

The nationalist methods of Stalinism in fighting the war are leading the Soviet Union to destruction. There is only one means whereby the Soviet Union can be safeguarded: that is the method of the revolutionary war of Lenin and Trotsky. A socialist appeal to the workers of Germany and Europe to end the fratricidal struggle by overthrowing the Nazis and going forward not to the "new order" of imperialism in Europe, but to a united socialist states of Europe. Such a policy would secure the support not only of the German workers, but the workers and soldiers of Britain and America. Stalinism is stabbing the Russian workers and peasants in the back by reliance on world imperialism. The only genuine allies of the Soviet Union are the workers of all countries – not least of all the workers of Germany, for the fate of the Soviet Union is bound up with their fate.

# **The need for the International**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 12, June 1943]

The Third International was created by Lenin and Trotsky as an instrument of world revolution. It was born in the midst of the revolutionary cataclysms which followed the last world war, and was inspired by the victory of the Russian revolution.

This was conceived by its founders as the first step towards world socialism, which would soon be followed by victories in the more advanced countries of the West.

Lenin described the last world war as marking the beginning of the definite decline and disintegration of capitalism. We had entered the epoch of imperialism, he said, when the progressive role of capitalism was at an end. Imperialism was the epoch of wars and of proletarian revolutions. The contradictions of capitalism had reached their extreme limit.

But, the decay and disintegration of capitalism of which Lenin wrote, has not only not ceased since the time when he analysed this phenomenon, but has assumed more and more frightful forms. The rise of fascism and the Second World War, are not evidence of a change in conditions, but a symptom of the aggravation of the decline and break-down of capitalism. They were the

definitive outcome of the failure of the old organisations of the working class to solve the problems which history had placed before them.

The full scope of the Comintern degeneration can be seen in the announcement of its dissolution[2], which is typical of the lies and sophistry of Stalinism:

“The historic role of the Communist International, organised in 1919 as a result of the political collapse of the overwhelming majority of the old pre-1914 war workers’ parties, consisted in preserving the teachings of Marxism from vulgarisation and distortion by opportunist elements of the working class movement, in helping to unite the vanguard of the advanced workers into genuine working class parties and in helping them to mobilise the masses of the workers in defence of their economic and political interests, for the struggle against fascism and the war which the latter was preparing, and for support of the Soviet Union as the main bulwark against fascism.”

This is a tissue of lies from beginning to end. “The historic role of the Communist International” consisted, in the eyes of its founders, in preparing the toilers of the world for the inevitable revolutions which would mark the end of capitalism. The solemn reference to the preservation of Marxism from vulgarisation and opportunism is humorous indeed. As if the British, American and other “communist” parties have not drained the limits of opportunism and degradation, in committing in a far more exaggerated fashion, the crimes and betrayal of the Second International, in supporting the capitalist class in the war; crimes which were the essence of the differences which Lenin claimed separated the old parties of the Second International from the Marxism of the Third International. The reference to fascism, without explaining its class content as one of the forms of capitalist rule, is merely in obedience to the present interests of Kremlin diplomacy. It only remains to be contrasted with the policy of the Comintern during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact when the Comintern and its national sections denounced the capitalist “democracies” as having caused the war and demanded peace on Hitler’s terms. Thus the argument is revealed in all its cynical nakedness.

The Comintern statement reads:

“The deep differences in the historic paths of development of the various countries of the world, the differences of character and even of the contradiction in the level and tempo of their economic and political development and finally the differences in the degree of consciousness and organisation of their workers, conditioned the different problems which faced the working class of each particular country.

“The entire course of events for the past quarter of a century as well as the accumulated experiences of the Communist International, have convincingly shown that the organisational form for uniting the workers chosen by the first congress of the Communist International and which correspond to the needs of the initial period of the rebirth of the working class movement, has more and more become outgrown by the movement’s development and by the increasing complexity of its problems in the separate countries, and has even become a hindrance to the further strengthening of the national working class parties.”

Thus the theory of “socialism in one country” has had its final and logical culmination. The argument here turns everything upside-down. Precisely because of the differences, the revolution will not begin in all countries simultaneously. But that does not at all mean that a world party of the working class is not needed. On the contrary it is the interdependence of world economy, which is expressed in differences and in the “law of uneven development” which makes the workers of all lands dependent on one another. The interests of the Russian, German, British, French and other workers are not separate because of the different problems with which “their” nations are faced, but on the contrary, are thereby bound even more indissolubly together. That does not mean to say, as Trotsky remarked of the Comintern, that simultaneously throughout the world the national parties must march forward with the left foot; different policies will be operated in different countries, if the conditions are different at certain periods, as it was with the Comintern in its best days under Lenin. But, the basic

principles which unite them into one international still remains. Far from the “initial period” of the organisational form of the international being outmoded, the tasks for which it was called into being to solve, have reached a new intensity. But of course this does not apply to the Comintern of today, which degenerated into a kept whore of the Stalinist bureaucracy, applying its policy according to the changing moods of Kremlin policy.

In reality the creation of the international was not a question of sentiment or convenience, but arose directly from the objective tasks posed in front of the international working class. More than ninety years ago Marx and Engels indicated that the movement of the working class for liberation cannot remain within the confines of a national shell, but must be international in character because of the international nature of world economy. The historic mission of capitalism which created the national state in its progressive phase as against feudal particularism, consisted precisely in developing the productive forces to the limit of which the national state and private ownership of the means of production would allow. It was capitalism’s great progressive task to create the world market. But in doing so, the means of production were developed to a point where the national state and private ownership of the means of production have become a hindrance to the further development of society. That is the cause of the impasse in which capitalist society finds itself today and which is expressed by the rise of fascism and of imperialist wars. The capitalists today clearly recognise the contradiction in which capitalist society finds itself. The pious bleatings of Churchill and Roosevelt on the outworn character of “national sovereignty” in the epoch of the telegraph, wireless and aeroplane is one indication of this. The recognition of the contradiction between the productive capacity of the world, and the poverty of its peoples, which has been characterised by them as an “anachronism” is another. They recognise it, but are impotent to take any steps to solve it, as the present war demonstrates. It is precisely the objective maturity of the conditions for the overthrow of capitalism which called the Communist International into being. The decay and disintegration of capitalism, which now assume monstrous forms, threatens all human culture with destruction. Thus, far from the mission for which the Communist International was formed being fulfilled, it has assumed a new intensity. The “maturity” of the national parties to which the resolution refers pertains to the maturity of a diseased youth, who has been infected with syphilis in infancy and in whom the disease has progressively increased its grip.

The Soviet Union has been bled and exhausted in the struggle against German imperialism. The only way in which the Soviet Union could be saved from further destruction and degeneration is in an extension of the October revolution to the rest of Europe. This road Stalin has closed. Consequently he has become more and more dependent on his Western “allies” – above all mighty American imperialism.

The war against German imperialism is now entering a decisive phase. Before passing to the offensive, American imperialism is demanding guarantees against the possibility of social revolution in Germany and Europe. Stalinism is providing those guarantees. It is revealing openly that it stands on the other side of the class trenches. But Stalinism has been reluctant to abandon a useful auxiliary of its foreign policy in the Communist International; one which also guarded it against the danger of a new international arising to represent the interests of the world working class. Anglo-American imperialism, which remains irreconcilably hostile to the socialist basis of the Soviet Union, has exerted pressure to force the abandonment of the Comintern, as an open abandonment of the programme of world revolution. Thus they believe they have safeguarded themselves in the upheavals they believe will follow the post-war period.

History reveals itself in ironical contradictions. Stalin has undoubtedly dealt the Soviet Union and the world working class severe blows with this new perfidy. However, Anglo-American imperialism, just when it imagines it has secured a new basis for world capitalism in this victory over the Soviet Union, in reality has undermined it. The disintegration of the national “communist” parties can only be speeded up by this step. It is not yet clear whether the subsidies of the Comintern to the national sections will now cease. If so, the collapse of the national sections will take place very soon. If, on the other hand, Stalin still continues the subsidies with the intention of reconstituting the “international” in case of difficulties with his “democratic” allies, the blow will still be far-reaching and have profound consequences. The perspectives of post-war victory for the Allies, with the continuance of capitalism in Europe and the world, will



leave Russia at the mercy of Wall Street. In this case it is more probable that the international will never be reconstituted even in the formal sense, in which it existed for the last decade.

But in striking this weapon of the foreign policy of the Kremlin out of its hands, the imperialists are clearing the way for a return to the real ideals for which the Third International was founded. After an initial period of confusion and bewilderment the rapid regroupment of the vanguard of the international working class will take place. By giving the quietus to the Third International, world imperialism merely clears the way for the Fourth. Could they but realise it, as Trotsky points out, the Comintern has rendered them inestimable service, by disorganising, demoralising and leading the workers' revolutions to defeat in country after country. They have now destroyed it. But the period which was ushered in by the present war, far from ensuring the tranquil growth of capitalism, ensures a period of revolutions and disturbances unprecedented in the history of the world. Capitalism is doomed. The Third International has followed the Second into oblivion. They have tied their fate to that of world capitalism and will be destroyed with it. The long years of isolation and swimming against the stream for the international communists is beginning to end. The meaning of their struggle will now be discerned by broad masses. The pre-history of the Fourth International is over. It will now enter into its own. Many times has the bourgeoisie slain the spectre of the revolution, only to see it rise again. We can repeat to the capitalists the good words of Rosa Luxemburg:

“You fools! Your ‘order’ is built on sand! Tomorrow the revolution will arise again in all its majesty and to your terror will announce with a voice of thunder: ‘I was, I am, and I shall be!’ ”

The banner of international socialism is now carried on the shoulders of the Fourth International. Proudly it unfurls the slogan: “Workers of all lands unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to win!”

# **The rise and fall of the Communist International**

**By Ted Grant**

[Workers' International News, Vol. 5 No. 11, June 1943]

The Third International has been officially buried. In the most undignified and contemptible fashion it would be possible to conceive, it has passed off the stage of history. Hurriedly and without consultation with all the adhering parties, not to speak of the rank and file throughout the world, without any democratic discussion and decision, as the result of the pressure of American imperialism, Stalin has perfidiously abandoned the Comintern.

To understand how it is that this organisation which aroused the terror and hatred of the whole capitalist world has come to such an inglorious end at the bidding of capitalism, it is necessary to review briefly the stormy rise and even stormier decline of the International. The decree for its dissolution was merely an acknowledgement of what has long been known to all informed people: that the Comintern as a factor making for world socialism was dead and had departed forever from its original aims and purposes. Its demise was predicted and foreseen long in advance.

The Third International grew out of the collapse of capitalism in the last war. The Russian revolution sent a wave of revolutionary fervour through the ranks of the working class throughout the world. To the war-weary, disillusioned and embittered masses, it came as a message of hope, of inspiration and courage; it showed the way out of the bloody chaos into which capitalism had plunged society. It was born as a direct consequence of the betrayal and breakdown of the

Second International which supported the ruling classes in the last war.

The breakdown of imperialism and capitalism was signalled by the revolutions in Germany, Austria, Hungary, revolutionary situations in Italy, France and even Britain. The spectre of socialist revolution hung all over Europe. The memoirs and writings of nearly all the bourgeois politicians of that time bear witness to the despair, the lack of confidence of the bourgeoisie in the face of the fact that they had lost control of the situation. Social Democracy saved capitalism.

The powerful trade-union and socialist bureaucracies placed themselves at the head of the upsurge of the masses and diverted it into harmless channels. In Germany, Noske and Scheidemann[3] conspired with the junkers and capitalists to destroy the revolution. The soviets of workers, soldiers, sailors, peasants and even students, which had issued from the November revolution of 1918, held power in their hands. The social democrats handed the power back to the capitalists.

Gradually, slowly, peacefully, as their theoretical conceptions explained it, they would transform capitalism into socialism. In Italy, by 1920, the workers had seized the factories. Instead of leading the workers to the conquest of power, the Socialist Party bade them cease “unconstitutional” procedure. So it was throughout Europe. The results of this programme are evident today. The worst tyranny and the bloodiest war in the history of capitalism. But precisely because of the breakdown of international socialism in the Second International, which had betrayed Marxism, the Third International was formed.

As early as the beginning of the last war [First World War] Lenin had courageously issued the call for the Third International. The Third International was formally inaugurated in March 1919. Its declared aims and objects were the overthrow of world capitalism and the construction of a world chain of united soviet socialist republics to join up with the USSR, which itself was not conceived as an independent entity but merely as the base for the world

revolution. Its fate would be determined and was bound up with the fate of the world revolution.

The formation of the Third International swiftly led to the creation of mighty communist parties throughout the most important countries in the world. In Germany, France, Czechoslovakia and other countries, communist parties with a mass membership were created. In Britain a small communist party was formed which wielded considerable influence. The success of the world revolution in the next period seemed assured by the development of events. The communist parties in Europe were steadily increasing in numbers and influence at the expense of the social democracy.

The last war had not succeeded in solving any of the problems of world capitalism. In fact it had aggravated them. Capitalism had broken down at its “weakest link” as Lenin expressed it. The attempts to destroy the young Soviet Republic by the wars of intervention had completely failed. German capitalism, the mightiest in Europe, found itself stripped of its resources, part of its territory, burdened with staggering reparation payments and generally placed in an impossible position. British and French imperialists, the “victors” in the last world war, were in a position fundamentally not much better.

Encouraged by the Russian revolution, the colonial and semi-colonial masses were stirring and preparing to revolt. The masses at home were restless and uneasy and the economic position of Anglo-French imperialism had worsened considerably in comparison with that of Japanese and American capitalism. It was on this international background that the crisis broke out in Germany in 1923. Germany with her high productive capacity was crippled by the restrictions imposed by Versailles[4] and had now become the weakest link in the chain of world capitalism.

The failure of Germany to pay the instalments on the reparations resulted in the French capitalists marching into the Ruhr. This helped to complete the collapse

of the German economy and the German bourgeoisie endeavoured to unload the burdens onto the shoulders of the working and middle classes. The mark fell in value from 20 to 40 to the pound in January, to 5 million in July and 47 million at the end of August. The indignant German masses turned towards communism.

As Brandler, the then leader of the Communist Party, stated at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Comintern: “There were signs of a rising revolutionary movement: We had temporarily the majority of the workers behind us, and in this situation believed that under favourable circumstances we would proceed immediately to the attack...” But unfortunately the leadership of the International failed to stand up to the test and take advantage of the opportunity. Success in Germany would inevitably have led to victory throughout Europe. But as in Russia of 1917, so in Germany of 1923, sections of the leadership vacillated.

Stalin, with his organic opportunism, urged that the German party be “curbed” from taking any action. The result was that the favourable opportunity to take power in Germany was missed and the communists in Germany suffered defeat. For similar reasons the revolution in Bulgaria also suffered shipwreck. But the defeats of the revolution in Europe caused by the failure of the leadership inevitably led to serious consequences. As Lenin had written, urging the necessity to prepare for the insurrection in Russia in 1917: “The success of the Russian and world revolution depends upon two or three days’ struggle.”

The failure of the world revolution and the isolation of the Soviet Union, taken in conjunction with its backwardness, the weariness and apathy of the Soviet masses who had gone through years of war, terrible privations and suffering during the course of the civil war and the intervention, their disillusionment and despair at the failure of their hopes of aid from the workers of Europe: all this led inevitably to reaction within the USSR.

Reflecting at the time, perhaps unconsciously, the interests of the reactionary and

conservative bureaucracy which was just beginning to raise itself above the Soviet masses, Stalin for the first time in 1924 came forward with the utopian and anti-Leninist theory of “socialism in one country”. This “theory” sprang directly from the defeat which the revolution had suffered in Germany. It indicated a turning away from the principles of revolutionary internationalism on which the Russian revolution had been based and on which the Communist International was founded.

Stalin, at the funeral of Lenin in January 1924, from force of habit following in the tradition of the Russian revolution declared: “In leaving us comrade Lenin enjoined on us fidelity to the Communist International. We swear to thee, comrade Lenin, to devote our lives to the enlargement and strengthening of the union of workers of the whole world, the Communist International.”[5] At that time he had not the slightest notion of whither the theory of socialism in one country would lead the Soviet Union and the Comintern.

The history of the Comintern since those days has been largely bound up with the fluctuating policies of the bureaucracy of the USSR. Lenin had insistently linked the fate of the Soviet Union with that of the world working class, and principally of its vanguard the Comintern. Even the oath of the Red Army pledged the red soldiers to loyalty to the international working class. Indeed the Red Army was not regarded as an independent “national” force, but as one of the instruments of the world revolution.

Of course, all this has long since been altered by Stalin. Trotsky, in conjunction with Lenin who, in his last years, viewed the developing situation with alarm, had already begun the struggle against the bureaucratisation of the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet state in 1923. Lenin was warning of the dangers of degeneration which threatened the Soviet state.

On the background of the growing reaction, nationally and internationally, the struggle between the internationalists and the Thermidorians[6] entered into an

acute stage. Trotsky, in alliance with Lenin, had demanded the restoration of complete democracy within the Bolshevik Party and the soviets. Lenin, in pursuit of this objective, had demanded the removal of Stalin from the post of General Secretary of the party because he had become the focal point around which the bureaucracy was crystallising.

After Lenin's death, Zinoviev, Kamenev[7] and Stalin, "the troika" secured a decision disregarding Lenin's advice by the Central Committee and commenced a campaign against Lenin's ideas which were being put forward by Trotsky, with the spurious invention and legend of "Trotskyism". The fate of the Comintern was linked with the fate of the Bolshevik Party of the Soviet union which, through its prestige and experience, was naturally the dominant force in the International.

The transition from the policy of world revolution to that of socialism in one country expressed a sharp turn to the right in the Comintern. In Russia, Zinoviev and Kamenev were forced into opposition by the anti-Marxian policy now being developed by Stalin. They were thrust into an alliance with Trotsky and his supporters. Stalin, together with Bukharin, opposed the policy of industrialising Russia through a series of five year plans suggested by the Left Opposition led by Trotsky and came out with his famous aphorism at the plenary meeting of the Central Committee in April 1927 that "to attempt to build the Dnieperstroy hydro-electric station would be the same thing for us as for a muzhik[8] to buy a gramophone instead of a cow." [9]

As late as the end of 1927, during the preparations for the fifteenth party congress, whose task was to expel the Left Opposition, Molotov said repeatedly: "We must not slip down into poor peasant illusions about the collectivisation of the broad masses. In the present circumstances it is no longer possible." Inside Russia the policy was to allow the kulaks (rich peasants) and the Nepmen (capitalists in the towns – so-called after the "New Economic Policy" of 1921), full scope for economic development. This policy was perfectly typified by the slogan coined by Bukharin with the full support of Stalin, given out to the

peasantry: “Enrich yourselves!”

The policy of the Comintern was now pushed far to the right with the preoccupation of Stalin to find allies to “defend the Soviet Union from attack.” The Comintern was already being reduced to the role of a border guard. The disagreements within the Bolshevik Party and the International flared up over the question of the Chinese revolution and the situation in Britain. In China during 1925-7 the revolution was stirring up the millions of Asia into action. The Comintern, instead of relying on the workers and peasants to carry through the revolution, as was the Leninist policy in Russia, preferred to rely on the Chinese capitalists and generals.

The Left Opposition warned of the consequences of this policy. The Chinese Communist Party was the sole workers’ party in China and had a dominating influence over the working class; the peasantry were looking towards the example in Russia to show them the way out of their centuries-long suffering at the hands of the landlords, through the seizure of the land. But the Comintern stubbornly refused to take the road of working-class independence which Lenin had insisted on as the prerequisite for communist policy in relation to the bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist revolutions in the East.

Meanwhile a similar policy was pursued in Britain where the masses were undergoing a process of intense radicalisation. As a means of struggling against intervention against the Soviet Union the Russian trade unions made an agreement with the General Council of the TUC. The tendency towards revolutionary developments in Britain is seen in the fact that a million members, a quarter of the trade-union membership, were organised in the Minority Movement[10]. Trotsky, analysing the situation in Britain, had predicted the outbreak of a general strike.

The task of the Communist Party and the Communist International should have been to prepare the workers for the inevitability of a betrayal on the part of the



trade-union leadership. Instead, they sowed illusions in the minds of the workers, especially as the trade-union bureaucrats had covered themselves with the agreement with the Russian trade unions, whose prestige they utilised as a cloak. After the betrayal of the 1926 general strike by the trade-union bureaucracy, Trotsky demanded that the Russian trade unions should break off relations with the TUC. This Stalin and the Comintern refused to do.

After using the Anglo-Russian committee for as long as they needed, more than a year after the general strike, the British trade-union leadership broke off relations. The Comintern let out a howl that they had been betrayed. But meanwhile the young Communist Party of Great Britain which should have increased its membership by leaps and bounds as a result of these great events, was paralysed and disorientated by the policy of the International, was completely discredited and dwindled in influence among the masses. These further defeats of the International, due directly to the policy of Stalin and the bureaucracy, at first sight paradoxically, increased the power of the bureaucracy within the Soviet Union.

The Soviet masses were further disheartened and disillusioned by these new defeats of the international proletariat and suffered a further decline in spirits. The defeats which had been a direct consequence of the policy of Stalin and the bureaucracy further strengthened its hold on the Soviet Union. The Left Opposition led by Trotsky which had correctly analysed and forecast these developments was now expelled from the Bolshevik Party and from the International.

The internal results of Stalin's policy now began to bear fruit in the alarming growth of the strength and influence of the kulaks and of the Nepmen. The Soviet Union stood on the brink of disaster. In panic and terror Stalin and the bureaucracy were compelled to adopt a caricature of the very policy for which Trotsky and his co-thinkers had been expelled. In Russia the five year plans against which Stalin had so strenuously fought were introduced.

It is on the basis of this planned production that the Soviet Union achieved its greatest successes and on which the present day USSR bases itself in war. Meanwhile the panic turn to the left internally was reflected in a panic turn to the left internationally. Stalin had burned his fingers badly in his attempts to lean on capitalist elements in China and to conciliate Social Democracy. Now he veered the International sharply in the opposite direction. In violation of its statutes the International did not hold a conference for four years. A new conference was called which introduced officially the programme of “socialism in one country” into the programme of the Communist International. It also proclaimed the end of capitalist stability and the beginning of what was termed the “Third Period”. This so-called third period was supposed to usher in the period of the final collapse of world capitalism. At the same time the Social Democracy, according to the once-famous (but now buried) theory of Stalin, was supposed to have transformed itself into “social fascism”. No agreements were now possible with “social fascists” who constituted the main danger confronting the working class and must be destroyed.

It was just at this period that the unprecedented slump of 1929-33 affected the world. In particular it hit Germany. The German workers were thrust into a position of degradation and misery and the middle classes were ruined. Germany’s unemployment figure rose steadily till at the peak it reached 8,000,000. The middle class, having failed to receive anything from the revolution of 1918, and disappointed with the failure of the communists in 1923 to take power, now in anguish and despair began to look for a solution to their problems in a different direction.

Subsidised and financed by the capitalists, the fascists began to secure a mass basis in Germany. In the elections of September 1930, they secured nearly six and a half million votes. Despite their expulsion from the Communist International, Trotsky and his followers still considered themselves as part of it and insistently demanded that they be allowed to return to the ranks. At the same time they subjected the suicidal theory, which had now been adopted by the Comintern, to a sharp criticism. In place of it they demanded a return to the realistic Leninist policy of the united front[11] as a means of winning the masses in action and through their own experience, to communism.

With the victory of Hitler at the polls Trotsky sounded the alarm. In a pamphlet entitled *The turn in the Communist International – The situation in Germany* he issued a signal for a campaign, which was carried on for three years by the International Left Opposition of the Comintern, as the Trotskyists looked on themselves. In Germany, France, USA, Britain, in far away South Africa, and in all countries where they had groups, the Trotskyists conducted a campaign demanding that the German Communist Party set into motion a campaign for a united front with the social democrats to prevent Hitler from coming to power.

At the direct instructions and bidding from Stalin and the Comintern, the German Communist Party denounced this policy as a counter-revolutionary “social fascist” one. They insistently fought against social democracy as the “main enemy” of the working class and argued that there was no difference between democracy and fascism. In September 1930, the *Rote Fahne*, organ of the German CP proclaimed: “Last night was Herr Hitler’s greatest day, but the so-called election victory of the Nazis is the beginning of the end.” [September 15, 1930]

Right throughout these years the Comintern continued its fatal course. When Hitler organised a referendum in 1931 to oust the social democratic government in Prussia, at the direct insistence of Stalin and the Comintern, the German communists voted with the Nazis against the social democrats. As late as May 1932, the *British Daily Worker* could proudly indict the Trotskyists for their policy in Germany thus: “It is significant that Trotsky has come out in defence of a united front between communist and social democratic parties against fascism. No more disruptive and counter-revolutionary class lead could possibly have been given at a time like the present.”

Meanwhile Trotsky had written four pamphlets and dozens of articles and manifestoes. Everywhere the international Trotskyists explored every avenue to exert pressure on the Comintern to change its policy. In vain. In January 1933 Hitler was enabled to take power without any organised opposition whatsoever

in a country with the most highly organised working class and with the strongest Communist Party outside of Russia.

For the first time in history, reaction was enabled to conquer power without any resistance on the part of the working class. The German CP numbered 6,000,000 supporters, the Social Democracy numbered 8,000,000 – together they were the mightiest force in Germany. By this betrayal, the German CP was doomed forever.

But the Comintern was far from recognising the nature of the catastrophe. Instead, it solemnly endorsed the policy of the German CP and of the International as having been perfectly correct. An organisation which cannot learn from the lessons of history is doomed. As a force for world socialism, the Communist International was dead. The International Left Opposition broke away and proclaimed the necessity of a new international. But what was apparent to the vanguard who had abandoned the attempt to reform the Comintern, could not be apparent to the broad masses. Only great events could teach them.

The Communist International continued to carry on this false policy right up to 1934. When the fascists in France, encouraged by the successes of fascism in Austria and Germany, conducted armed demonstrations for the overthrow of the Liberal government and Parliament, the CP issued orders to demonstrate with them. But now the full danger which Hitler represented to the Soviet Union was apparent to everyone. Stalin and the bureaucracy became panic-stricken. Contemptuous and cynical of the capacity of the Comintern as an instrument of world revolution, Stalin more openly converted it into an instrument of Russian foreign policy.

An organisation in class society which ceases to represent the working class inevitably falls under the pressure and influence of the bourgeoisie. Stalin, in his search for allies, now turned to the bourgeoisie of Britain and France. The

“Popular Front” policy was initiated and endorsed at the last congress of the International held in 1935. This policy of coalition with the Liberal capitalists is one against which Lenin had struggled all his life. It represented a new stage in the degeneration of the Comintern and the first workers’ state.

With the rise of Hitler, again due to the policies of Stalin, the stranglehold of the bureaucracy within the Soviet Union was further increased. Higher over the Soviet masses has the bureaucratic caste raised itself and increased its power. But this progressive degeneration has had qualitative changes. From merely being incapable of insuring anything but defeats for the world working class, Stalinism has become opposed to the workers’ revolution in other countries. The Moscow trials, the murder of the old Bolsheviks, the purges, the murder and exile of tens of thousands of the flower of the Russian communist workers, completed the Stalinist counter-revolution within the Soviet Union.

Events in France and Spain[12] are fresh in every revolutionary’s mind. The Comintern played the main role in destroying the revolution which could have been accomplished. Indeed, it revealed itself as the fighting vanguard of the counter-revolution. The defeats of the world working class inevitably led to the new world war. Ironically, the war was ushered in by a pact between Hitler and Stalin. Thus Stalin dealt new blows to the world working class and the Comintern. It now executed a somersault and conducted a campaign for peace in the interests of Hitler, with a skilful counterfeit of a “revolutionary” policy.

As Trotsky forecast in his prediction of the Stalin-Hitler agreement in an article written in March 1933:

“The fundamental trait of Stalin’s international policy in recent years has been this: that he trades in the working-class movements just as he trades in oil, manganese and other goods. In this statement there is not an iota of exaggeration. Stalin looks upon the sections of the Comintern in various countries and upon the liberating struggle of the oppressed nations as so much

small change in deals with imperialist powers. When he requires the aid of France, he subjects the French proletariat to the radical bourgeoisie. When he has to support China against Japan, he subjects the Chinese proletariat to the Kuomintang. What would he do in the event of an agreement with Hitler? Hitler, to be sure, does not particularly require Stalin's assistance to strangle the German Communist Party. The insignificant state in which the latter finds itself has moreover been assured by its entire preceding policy. But it is very likely that Stalin would agree to cut off all subsidies for illegal work in Germany. This is one of the most minor concessions that he would have to make and he would be quite willing to make it. One should also assume that the noisy, hysterical and hollow campaign against fascism which the Comintern has been conducting for the last few years will be slyly squelched."

This policy of Stalin and the "stinking corpse" of the Comintern suffered irretrievable ruin when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union. The Comintern had to execute a right about turn and convert itself once again into a doormat for Roosevelt and British imperialism. But with the increased dependence of Stalin on American and British imperialism, has come the increased pressure on the part of capitalist "allies". American imperialism especially has demanded the ending of the Comintern as a final guarantee against the danger of social revolution in Europe after the downfall of Hitler.

The long drawn-out pretence is over. Stalin has dissolved the degenerate Comintern. In doing so he openly announces his stepping over to the side of the capitalist counter-revolution as far as the rest of the world is concerned. But the imperialists, in forcing Stalin to make this trade in return for concessions and bargains on their part, have not understood the consequences this will have. It cannot and will not prevent the coming of new revolutions throughout the world. In the less than two decades since the beginning of its degeneration, the Comintern has ruined many favourable situations in many countries.

The coming decades will witness many revolutions with the breakdown and collapse of capitalism. Even the violently disturbed epoch of the period between

the wars will seem comparatively tranquil compared to the period which lies ahead. On this background of storms and upheavals a real instrument of world revolution will be created. What the workers lacked in the last decades, outside Russia, was a workers' Bolshevik Party and a Bolshevik leadership. The great days of the Comintern of 1917-23 will live again. The growth in support for the ideas of Marxism internationally, based on the traditions of Bolshevism, the rich experience of the past, and learning the lessons of defeats of the working class, can once again lead the oppressed to the overthrow of capitalism and to the world socialist republic.

## **Second front will not end fascism**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 15, Mid-July 1943]

The invasion of Sicily marks a new stage in the war. It begins the offensive of Anglo-American imperialism against their German-Italian rivals to destroy their hegemony in Europe and cripple them as competitors on the world market.

But as the capitalist press is constantly warning, and as Churchill admitted in his last speech, very heavy slaughter would have to be endured by the British and American soldiers, before the Anglo-American imperialists will be enabled to gain a mastery of the European continent.

Both the German Nazis and the Italian fascists are making desperate back-to-the-wall appeals to the population of Italy and Germany to resist to the utmost as the prospect of defeat looms ahead. With the victories and heroic resistance of the Soviet Union against the onslaught of the German imperialists, the German masses have become completely disillusioned with the Nazis. Ten years of fascism with all the miseries that it has meant to the German people, have left their marks on the minds of the German workers and soldiers. In the case of Italy the position is, if anything, even worse. After 20 years of fascism, the full rottenness, corruption and degeneracy of Mussolini's regime has been laid bare for all to see.



The masses in both Italy and Germany are in a state of torment and growing opposition towards the regimes which have brought nothing but disaster, misery and suffering to them. Particularly in Italy, strikes and minor uprisings are taking place among the workers, peasants and soldiers. In Turin, Milan and other areas mass strikes have taken place. In the towns of the Ruhr, among the sailors at Kiel and the soldiers in the army, and also in the Italian navy and army, mutinies have been reported in the British press. The Nazi and fascist gangsters have replied to this nascent rebellion with reprisals, executions and redoubled repression. But despite the savage and merciless terror against all opponents of the regime, bitter and stronger opposition has been mounting with growing vigour and strength. And in occupied Europe itself, from the Ukraine to France, the hatred of the invader has been growing more intense and only waits for the slightest relaxation of the grip of the Nazis to burst forth in an uprising with the force of a pent-up volcano.

But statements of the Anglo-American imperialist governments show that they do not have and do not expect to get the support of the peoples of either Italy or Germany. In fact they expect invasion would see the Italians lining up behind Mussolini in a desperate attempt at resistance. If the Allies were fighting a real war against fascism they could win and obtain the support of the Axis workers and soldiers who have been groaning under the yoke of totalitarian oppression.

The aim of Anglo-American imperialism is not at all to rid Europe of the horror of fascism but to cripple their rivals and replace Axis domination and occupation of Europe by that of Britain and America. Far from seeing the rumbles of revolt in Germany and Italy as a factor to be utilised to the fullest extent as a means of securing the downfall of fascism by the efforts of the German and Italian workers themselves, the British and American capitalists merely regard this as a means to the military overthrow of their rivals, and even look upon it with fear and alarm because of the consequences it would have. Far from appealing to the German and Italian workers to overthrow their oppressors and those responsible for organising and financing the fascists – the monopoly capitalists of Italy and Germany – they are refusing to differentiate between the workers and the fascists, between the slaves and the slave-owners. Far from preparing to strike at the roots of fascism by striking at the ruling class, they are preparing to prop up

and support as quislings the capitalists and landowners in Italy and Germany and throughout Europe as agents for the exploitation of the people of Europe.

If further proof is it needed of the hypocrisy and cynicism in the claim of the “democracies” that they stand for the liberation of Europe and the rights of its peoples to determine their own destiny, it is provided by the attitude towards Giraud. The Anglo-American imperialists in North Africa have decisively intervened in the struggle being waged between Giraud[13] and de Gaulle for control of the French armed forces in North Africa. This should have been an “internal” question for the French themselves to decide according to ordinary capitalist diplomacy. But proclaiming their desire not to intervene in French affairs, the American imperialists, dragging the British after them, intervened and forced the retention of Giraud as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Not that there is much to choose between these two worthies. The masses in France associate Giraud with the Vichy regime which cynically hired itself out as a kept servant and which helped the Nazis to exploit the French people. Giraud supported Petain and kept in power the Vichyites in Algeria. Yet he is kept in power by the will of American imperialism. To the Americans he appears as a pliant tool who can be used for the ends of Wall Street. Thus the capitalists in control even today, are making certain of having the puppets they want ready to thrust to power at the expense of alienating the people of Europe.

Every worker wishes to see fascism wiped off the face of the earth once and for all. It is clear to the workers of the whole world what ghastly horror the victory of the fascist barbarians would mean to all workers. But the victory of Anglo-American imperialism would not at all mean the destruction of fascism. It would not have much better consequences for the workers of the world than that of the Axis.

Meanwhile, Hitler, by enslaving all Europe, has united the workers of all Europe against him in a common bond of solidarity. The revolution in Germany will unite Polish, French, Czech, Dutch, Norwegian, Ukrainian and other workers taken as slave labour to Germany together with the German workers. But when

the masses in Germany begin to revolt, the British capitalists will attempt to suppress them by force. At the same time that the capitalists are making these preparations, the Labour leaders and the so-called Communist Party are playing the game of the capitalists by repeating the lies and slanders against the German workers and hiding the real causes of the war, and of fascism. They act as deceivers of and traitors to the working class. They support the measures the capitalists are preparing to protect their colonial loot and profits.

It is the duty of the British workers to give class solidarity and support to the German workers. If the British workers had to take power that would sound the death-knell of Hitler and Mussolini. When the German and Italian workers move to overthrow their rulers they must receive the full support of the British working class. The best aid that the British workers can give their comrades in Europe is to continue the struggle against the ruling class in Britain. The sole solution to the problems of war and fascism are provided by the programme of the Workers' International League and the Fourth International which carries on the fight for a socialist Britain and a socialist united states of Europe.

# **Fascism collapsing – Europe’s revolution has begun**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 16, August 1943]

*“If I had been Italian I am sure that I should have been with you from start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism.” (Churchill on Mussolini in 1927)*

Mussolini is gone. Fascism in Italy is dead. This fact has filled with rejoicing the masses of workers and peasants in Italy. It will be greeted with jubilation by the working class throughout the world. The fall of Mussolini is the first of great events that Europe and the world will see in the coming years. It marks the beginning of the revolutionary upsurge in all the countries of Europe. Hitler can see in the fate of Mussolini the foreshadowing of his own doom.

The capitalist press in Britain and America has hypocritically greeted the fall of the tyrant. Churchill has hurled epithets at Mussolini. But we remember the paeons of praise he bestowed upon him in 1927, when in a press interview he said how “charmed” he was, “by Signor Mussolini’s gentle and simple manner, and by his calm detached poise in spite of so many burdens and dangers.” We remember also how he praised Italian fascism for “the service your movement has rendered to the whole world.”

In spite of their hypocritical rejoicing, Allied big business looks with watchful

anxiety on the developments in the Italian peninsula. The puffed up bullfrog of the Pontine Marshes[14], as the socialist workers called Mussolini, has passed out of history in the most ludicrous and inglorious manner. In the hour of danger, fascism has found not a single supporter out of its boasted legions throughout the length and breadth of Italy.

Although it has come in a way unexpected to everybody, the fall of the “Duce” and of fascism is not at all surprising and was anticipated and predicted by the Marxists. The fascist regime, which by bestial terror against the Italian workers and peasants, held them in the totalitarian straightjacket for so many years, was already in an advanced stage of disintegration and decay. The period of more than two decades during which fascism held power in Italy had been the means of exposing it completely in the eyes of the masses. The corruption and misgovernment, the hunger and want which fascism had brought the toilers in Italy had already placed an irrepressible strain on the regime. It was in an attempt to stave off the brewing revolt of the workers and peasants that Mussolini in desperation launched the war against Abyssinia and sent the Italian troops to Spain to fight the Spanish republic. But these wars and the conquest of the “African Empire” did not alleviate the misery of the Italians but actually intensified it.

The entry of Italy into the present war provoked no enthusiasm among the population. The workers and peasants of Italy had developed an intense hatred of the regime and were completely apathetic and indifferent to defending its acquisitions and conquests in Africa. That is why the Italian soldiers did not fight very hard and surrendered without great resistance. They did not feel that they had anything worth fighting for. Twenty years of fascism had done its work. But the military defeats and the corruption and impotence of the regime began to shake it to its foundations. The masses began to stir from their long torpor. In the last few months, despite the rigid censorship, news has been leaking out of Italy telling of big strikes taking place in all the industrial towns, of minor uprisings among the peasants, of mutinies among the Italian soldiers, of demonstrations against the war and against Mussolini, despite the ruthless suppression, in all the big industrial cities[15]. The underground revolutionary opposition had experienced a re-birth and revival throughout Italy. Illegal leaflets, pamphlets,

papers and proclamations were receiving a wide circulation among the working class, and the poorer middle class in the towns and the peasants of the countryside, according to neutral correspondents stationed in Italy. It has been obvious for some time that the regime did not have the slightest support among the people and was regarded with universal loathing. The recent speech of the Pope warning and exhorting the Italian people against resorting to revolution was an indication of the fears and alarm of the ruling class. Revolution was looming ahead. The reckoning was at hand for the crimes and impositions of fascism! The great revenge of the working class was on the order of the day.

Faced with this situation, the capitalists and landowners, the bishops and the generals, the bankers and the monarchy – all who had subsidised Mussolini and his cut-throats – who had placed Mussolini in power as a means of protecting their property and privileges, began to look frantically for a means of saving themselves.

They realise that in any event, Italy has lost the war and that German imperialism has its back to the wall. They are endeavouring to find a way out when the revolutionary tide is already up to their necks and threatens to engulf them. The fall of the major part of Sicily and the imminent invasion of Italy by Allied imperialism has been the last straw. Italy threatens to become a battlefield. The capitalists feel on their necks the hot breath of revolution.

They feel that the only means of saving themselves and salvaging something from the wreck of fascism is to do a deal with big business in the “democracies”. Mussolini is no use to them for this purpose. The Italian people detest him and the workers of the “democracies” would never stand for a deal with Mussolini. For the capitalists of Britain and America it would be too dangerous. Mussolini could not serve the purpose of the capitalists any longer and had even become a dangerous incubus to them. The myth of the “leader” was easily dispensed with. With no more ceremony than that with which they would dismiss an office boy, they have booted Mussolini out[16]. There is nothing surprising in this as Mussolini, like all fascist dictators, was nothing but an obedient clerk in the

service of big finance.

But the end of fascism will not see such an easy passage for the property owners in Italy. They are quite willing to use Mussolini as a scapegoat for their crimes. Despite them, the fall of Mussolini will act like a rock which falls down a mountain and releases an avalanche. The workers and peasants of Italy are on the march. The socialist revolution in Europe sees its first faint dawn. Already in all Italian towns huge demonstrations are taking place. The masses have been tearing down the insignia and posters of fascism, blackshirt militia have had their blackshirts torn from their backs by the infuriated crowds, not willing to tolerate the emblems of slavery a moment longer, the jails are being assailed by demonstrating crowds and the political prisoners released. The Red Flag has been proudly carried at the head of the demonstrating workers of Milan, who now can openly proclaim their allegiance to socialism. In spite of the severe gestures of the new military ruler Badoglio and of the king who are now in control and have proclaimed martial law, they cannot prevent the upsurge of the masses.

New waves of strikes, demonstrations and clashes are inevitable in the next days and weeks. Even a general strike is not unlikely. The masses who have rid themselves of Mussolini will not tolerate his accomplices for long. The conditions which brought about the fall of Mussolini will still exist and even grow worse. The landowners and capitalists will attempt to continue the unbearable exploitation of the masses as under Mussolini. The removal of Mussolini is the removal of the safety valve. Contrary to the expectation of the Italian ruling class it will not quieten the masses and relieve the situation but will release their pent up energy, despair and hopes and they will surge forward in the endeavour to obtain an alleviation of their unendurable slavery and obtain a better world.

The Italian ruling class is using desperate measures in the attempt to save the situation and they are relying on the Allies to provide a safeguard against their own masses. They intend behind the scenes to do a deal with Britain and

America and gain the best terms they can[17]. And already Churchill has refused to give an explicit refusal against any dealings with the new government in Italy, and Roosevelt has condemned wireless broadcasts from America which attacked Badoglio and the king. This bares the cynicism and reveals the real aims of the “democracies”. For the king and Badoglio are as guilty of the crimes of fascism as Mussolini himself. It was they who smoothed his path to power and handed him control in Rome. Daniel Guerin describes the role of Badoglio and the army generals in the rise of fascism to power in Italy in his book Fascism and big business:

“But it was the army above all that favoured the blackshirts. We have seen the role played by the colonel whom the ministry of war charged with studying the technical problems of the anti-socialist struggle. Shortly afterwards, general Badoglio, Chief of Staff, sent a confidential circular to all commandants of military districts stating that the officers then being demobilised (there were about 60,000 of them) would be sent to the most important centres and required to join the fasci, which they would staff and direct. They would continue to receive four-fifths of their pay. Munitions from the state arsenals came into the hands of the fascist bands, which were trained by officers on leave or even on active service. Many officers, knowing that the sympathies of their superiors had been won over to fascism, openly adhered to the movement.

“Cases of collusion between the army and the blackshirts were more and more frequent. For instance, the Fascio of Trento broke a strike with the help of an infantry company, and the Bolzano Fascio was founded by officers of the 232nd infantry.”

It is these fine gentlemen who now wish to don the cloak of “anti-fascism.”

The workers of Britain and America have a responsibility to the workers, peasants and soldiers of Italy. Their gathering movement of revolt has caused the fall of fascism. Its impact will shake every country in Europe. The real anti-



fascist revolution has hardly begun. The removal of a few figureheads does not alter the nature of the regime and the masses will never be content with this. The movement will spread and broaden and begin to affect other countries as well. But British and American imperialism will attempt to destroy the gathering social revolution in Europe as they did in the last war, when Churchill organised the armies of intervention against the young Soviet Republic. The fall of Mussolini is the beginning of a new epoch, the epoch of socialist revolution. British workers must prevent the ruling class from going to the rescue of the corrupt and rotting ruling class of Italy and saving them from destruction. Together with the workers of Europe in the coming epoch we must advance to the overthrow of capitalism, the father of fascism and advance to the new society of socialism.

# The Italian revolution and the tasks of British workers

By Ted Grant

[Workers' International News, Vol.5 No.12, August 1943]

The dismissal of Mussolini marks a new epoch in the development of the revolution and the decay and disintegration of imperialism on the continent of Europe. In order to appreciate the trends of development in the Italian peninsula, it is necessary to understand the causes which led Italy to take the road of fascist barbarism first among all the countries in Europe, and is now the first country in the war to turn towards revolution.

Italy has always been one of the most backward of the great powers. The peasantry, as in Russia, has been burdened by the impositions of the great landowners; the impoverished proletariat, even before the last war, built up a powerful socialist movement as a means of conducting the struggle against the bourgeoisie. Italy's participation in the last war was essentially that of a second rate power and though nominally on the side of the victors, Italy's gains in the last war were negligible. The weakened Italian bourgeoisie, faced with the ruin of the Italian economy, attempted to load the burdens of "reconstruction" as they had those of the war, onto the shoulders of the Italian masses.

It was as a reply to this offensive of the bourgeoisie that the masses of Italian workers and peasants launched the counteroffensive with brilliant success. The years 1918-20 marked the period of "anarchy" for Italian capitalism. The working class, and following them, the peasantry, forced tremendous

concessions from the ruling class. By September 1920, the workers had seized the factories and industries and the peasants had occupied the land. The real power was no longer in the hands of the capitalists, who were paralysed with fear, but in the hands of the working class. What was necessary was a Bolshevik Party to draw the conclusions for the masses from this and guide the workers to the conquest of power.

The reformist leadership of the working class was incapable of drawing the lessons. Blind and impotent, they betrayed the movement and guided it back into the channels of “constitutionalism”. Thus they prepared the way for the destruction of the working class movement.

### **Fascism in power loses social base**

[\[18\]](#)

The bourgeoisie, which had been scared out of its wits by the movement of the workers, temporarily gave them some concessions. But the economic crisis continued. The Italian bourgeoisie, without reserves, without rich colonies and with a weak economic base, could not hope to compete with the more powerful bourgeoisie of the Entente on the world market. Consequently, they were compelled to intensify the exploitation of the Italian masses on pain of collapse and extinction.

The heroic attempts of the proletariat to find a way out on the path of the socialist revolution had been blocked by the sabotage of the reformist leadership. The bourgeoisie looked for a solution to the intolerable crisis in which “law and order” could be established. The economic crisis was further intensified in the post-war collapse. The middle class found itself completely ruined and rendered desperate. Large sections had followed the lead of the workers in supporting the Socialist Party in the post war revolutionary wave. The core of the petty-

bourgeoisie could have been won with a bold policy on the part of the proletariat.

But in sheer despair, the petty bourgeoisie began to look for another solution. It was thus that the fascist movement arose as an expression of the desperation of the middle class. The big industrialists financed Mussolini liberally. Fascism began to organise its bands of crazed petty bourgeois and lumpen proletariat for the purpose of physically annihilating the leaders and the organisations of the proletariat. These bands of cut-throats roamed over Italy attacking workers' co-operatives, unions, socialist municipalities etc., under the protection of the bourgeois police. In 1922 Mussolini was placed in power by the landowners, industrialists, Church and monarchy, as the sole means of preserving their interests.

The first few years of his rule saw him precariously attempting to establish his domination.

The murder of Matteotti[19] provoked a wave of indignation throughout Italy and the working class only needed a revolutionary lead to overthrow the fascist regime. Still the socialists clung to "legal" methods. Mussolini survived the crisis and proceeded systematically to destroy the organisations of the working class. The disillusionment and demoralisation of the working class at the betrayal of their organisations led them to a position of prostration and apathy. Fascism firmly entrenched itself in power.

But once in power, fascism begins to lose its middle class base. The impoverishment and ruin of the petty bourgeoisie is not halted, but on the contrary, receives a new impetus by the victory of fascism. The counter-revolutionary delusions of the petty bourgeoisie are soon dispelled by the cold reality of the totalitarian state and the support for fascism ebbs away. The fascist regime loses its social basis completely and becomes an ordinary military-police bureaucratic dictatorship. That was the position of Mussolini's dictatorship. Yet

it has endured for more than two decades!

The secret of the long period of fascist rule lies not at all in the strength of the regime, but in world events on the one hand, and the apathy and torpor of the Italian masses, who had lost all perspectives with the betrayal of their organisations. The victory of Hitler, the defeat of the French and Spanish workers, the further decay and collapse of the working class movement, the strengthening of reaction on a world scale, could not but further demoralise and plunge the Italian working class into gloomy indifference and lack of faith in the future.

But the crisis which overshadowed the regime forced the Italian bourgeoisie to attempt outward expansion to save themselves from being overthrown. The Abyssinian adventure[20] and the war which Mussolini waged against the Spanish workers, were symptoms of the desperation of Italian fascism. Far from solving anything, they merely increased the misery of the workers and peasants and increased the pressure on the regime. After the fall of France, the Italian capitalists eagerly seized the opportunity which they imagined had been presented, to secure a rich empire on the cheap.

But the calculations of the bourgeoisie were completely falsified by events. Never in history had an army fought with less morale and less belief in their cause than the army of fascist Italy! The coarse witticisms of the British ruling class against “cowardly” Italians are completely beside the mark. The Italian army, like that of Tsarist Russia, is composed mainly of peasants. Exploited and oppressed by the landlords, beaten and tyrannised by the fascist thugs, their thoughts of the “enemy” were not against the armies opposing them, but of the landlords in the villages who lived well by battenning on them, while their women and children hungered and even starved. They thought of the burdensome taxes to keep up a bloated, ignorant and lazy fascist bureaucracy and fascist militia. They did not have the will to fight. Mussolini could not even defeat the Greeks! In Africa the empire disappeared while the Italian soldiery surrendered by the tens of thousands with only the semblance of resistance. Twenty years of fascism

had rotted the regime from top to bottom. There was not a live element in the whole of its apparatus, either in the army or the means of suppression at home. Moreover, Italy, as a backward and only semi-industrialised country, did not possess the technique for modern wars as her twin fascist Germany had the fortune of possessing in unrivalled technology and first rate industrial equipment. All these factors combining, the defeat of Italy became inevitable.

Trotsky, with infallible foresight and a profound understanding of the masses and of the historical process, in analysing the problems of the revolution in the fascist countries, had shown that it would require some sharp shock to rouse the masses from their lethargy and stupor, to take the road of mass opposition and mass struggle against the totalitarian regimes; a shock which could be provided by military defeats or the victory of the revolution in one of the democracies.

The defeats of the regime were a final revelation of its bankruptcy; its corruption and decay provided the means for the re-awakening of the Italian proletariat. The molecular process of recovery and revival had been proceeding apace behind the outward façade of strength and stability of the regime. The relationship of forces began to change within the country. For the first time mass strikes had been taking place in the towns against the unbearable increase in the cost of living, the peasants had begun to move in a series of minor revolts against the landlords and the unbearable tax impositions of the fascist officials and mutinies in the army were an ominous indication of the spirits of the troops. As early as the war against Greece, there were reports of units taken prisoner, singing the “Bandiera Rossa” (The Red Flag).

### **Only the Trotskyists understood the processes**

The bourgeoisie and the landowners could feel the ground trembling under their feet. As always in modern society, the approach of revolution was heralded by tension within all strata of society, within the ruling class as well as the workers,

within the petit bourgeoisie as well as in the ranks of the fascist bureaucracy and the state apparatus. The pressure from below produces fissures and uncertainty, quarrels and differences within the erstwhile solid ranks of the ruling class. They begin to seek a way out of the impasse, a means of escaping the rising tide of revolt which threatens to engulf them. From regarding the “Leader” as their saviour from the masses they begin to regard him as the author of their ills whose “mistakes” have landed them in an impossible situation. Abuse of the ruler and his immediate clique of collaborators are replaced by conspiracies and discussions of a coup d’etat, of a palace revolution, which by a timely movement from above will prevent and nip in the bud a movement from below. The existing relations between the classes have become unbearable and the situation cannot last. The ruling class seeks for some means of saving themselves. They cannot reconcile themselves to the doom which they feel is impending and will overtake them unless they can forestall it by some means.

Thus it was in Tsarist Russia before the February revolution. Thus it was in fascist Italy before the fall of Mussolini. Even a better analogy perhaps, was the removal of Primo de Rivera, the military dictator in Spain, by Alfonso in an effort to save the monarchy[21]. Tomorrow we will observe the same process in Hitler’s Germany. But all these moves in the ruling class, far from preventing the revolution, dialectically, are the means of precipitating it. The movement from above produces a mighty echo in the movement from below. Thus it was that Mussolini was flung aside by the ruling class in Italy in order to avert their overthrow. Thus as always in history, they have merely opened the first chapter in the revolution.

Whatever the fate of the Italian revolution may be, in passing, it has dealt the death blow to the cowards and renegades from the labour movement, ex-“Marxists” such as James Burnham[22] in the United States and C. A. Smith[23] in Britain and the whole tribe of petit bourgeois intellectuals and sceptics who have regarded the proletariat and the struggle for socialism with irony and scepticism. This short sighted professional rabble regarded the outward varnish of fascism as the development of a new form of society with a new ruling class, neither bourgeois nor proletarian! To them the inert attitude of the proletariat in Italy and Germany which bowed its head passively in face of

the fascist tyranny was proof of the incapacity of the proletariat and proof of a new society.

Incapable of understanding the dialectics of the development of society, they regard with irony, condescension and contempt, the strivings of the proletariat. As in the case of C. A. Smith, this was merely a bridge to justify desertion to the camp of the bourgeoisie. But they were not alone. The traitors of Stalinism and the labour bureaucracy, attempted to justify their own treachery by unloading the blame for the passivity of the masses onto the “incapacity” of the proletariat and the lack of ripeness for the socialist revolution, which they have put decades hence. How pitiful is Stalinism, which dissolved the Comintern on the eve of the fall of Mussolini, how pitiful are the Vansittartistic labour bureaucracy and Stalinism which unload the blame for Hitler onto the shoulders of the German proletariat which “tolerates” Hitler. In reality it is the unending defeats of the past two decades, caused by the self-same “leaders” and their present policies, which have lain like a pall over the proletariat of the whole world and produced the mood of frustration and despair, of demoralisation and disintegration, of lack of belief in itself and its own future. It is this indeed, which has led to the prolongation of the war and its continuance for four nightmare years before the first movement of the proletariat. All these forces and moods were merely the result of the reaction which they themselves had called forth.

Alone of all tendencies in the labour movement, the Trotskyists maintained faith in the working class and themselves.

Even at the darkest depth of reaction they maintained the banner of international socialism, of the international revolution and retained their faith and confidence in the proletariat. And this was not accidental either. They had analysed and foreseen the reasons for the defeats and understood the basis of the turn towards reaction and naturally understanding the causes which did not lay in the proletariat but in the leadership of the proletariat, they could carry on with the sure confidence given by an understanding of Marxism. All other tendencies were blind. They had caused the defeat and were incapable of understanding the



way out of the impasse.

The crisis in Italy came to a head with the invasion of Sicily. The unprecedented lack of support of the regime was revealed from the fact that even on their “own” soil the Italian soldiers demonstrated no great eagerness to fight. Their resistance was no more energetic and hearty than that on the shores of Africa across the seas. Despite the exaggerations of Allied propaganda, it seems clear that the alien invaders were regarded with no great hostility in Palermo and other towns. Surely a rare occurrence in history! Anything, anything could not be worse than Mussolini, was the attitude of the inhabitants of this island. The regime was so rotten and so loathsome to the broad masses that they did not regard it as much better than that of a foreign conqueror. To this catastrophe had Mussolini’s braggadocio and bombast reduced Italy! An emptiness and feeling of terror must have gathered round the hearts of the ruling class in Italy.

The denouement was not long in coming. In fear of the movement of the masses and realizing that for Italian imperialism the war was irretrievably lost, the ruling class sought to save something from the wreckage. From Germany, already hard pressed and, facing the virtual certainty of defeat in the future, they could expect no more aid than would reduce Italy to the status of France or the satellite Balkan countries even in the event of problematic victory. And with the certainty that the “democratic” allies would extract ever greater penalties and tribute in that event. Mussolini was of no more use to them. They feared the invasion of the Allies. They feared their mightier “partner”. In frantic panic, trapped in insuperable contradictions, the ignoble ruling classes of Italy contemptuously cast Mussolini onto the scrapheap of history.

But the bourgeoisie have lost all perspective for the morrow. The monarchy and the General Staff imagined that they could drop Mussolini and carry on as before, graciously offering Mussolini’s hide to the masses as a scapegoat for their crimes. Surely Badoglio’s proclamation of martial law will rank in history as the perfect example of the illusions of a regime which has been condemned by history to destruction. The dismissal of Mussolini was followed by a declaration

of stringent martial law. But the decree merely remained on paper. Badoglio did not have the resources to carry it out despite the illusions of the General Staff.

The fall of Mussolini acted like an electric shock to the Italian workers. When the news came over the wireless, moved by a common impulse, hundreds of thousands rushed into the streets in the black-out to demonstrate their relief and their joy. The process that Trotsky had visualized would develop in Italy to mark the fall of fascism, had begun. (As the news trickled through, one could not but allow one's thoughts to dwell on the "Old Man" and to marvel at his unerring instinct and profound understanding which could develop in advance almost exactly the stages through which the revolution would pass.)

After 20 years of fascism, the proletariat, now hardened by terror and persecution, has stepped on to the arena reinvigorated and fresh, like a giant awakening from a long sleep. Mass strikes in all the industrial cities, Milan, Turin, Genoa, etc., broke out in 24 hours. The railways in the whole of Northern Italy were paralysed within a few days. The jails were stormed by the workers and the political prisoners were set free. The fascist headquarters in the large towns have been sacked and the fascist printing presses seized by the workers in Milan and other areas. Anyone wearing the insignia of fascism in Italy on the day after Mussolini's disappearance stood in danger of being lynched. Fascism vanished overnight. The belated decree dissolving the fascist party merely took cognizance of a fact that had already been irrevocably established by the workers and the soldiers themselves. Symbolically in Milan, which once again has proudly taken the lead as "Red Milan", short shrift was given by the indignant workers to the murderer of Matteotti. In other areas too, the most hated of the fascist bosses have been dispatched by the workers. In Turin "two millionaire fascists" have been executed by the workers. Streets in Milan have been renamed in honour of Matteotti and other working class leaders murdered by the fascists. The attempt to use the soldiers against the demonstrating crowds in Milan has resulted in the soldiers going over to the side of the workers.

## **Reformists and Stalinists prepare betrayal**

Overnight the working class has demonstrated its vitality and strength as though fascism had never existed. Workers committees have been set up in the factories in the industrial towns. Even the Stalinist Daily Worker, following on the news published in the bourgeois press, is compelled to report:

“The radio [Swiss] reported that a citizens’ committee, consisting of representatives of industrial workers, soldiers and peasants has been created in Milan, centre of the industrial north...

“A majority of the troops of the Milan garrison are reported to have sworn allegiance to the committee. The banned communist paper La Riscossa and the liberal paper Il Mondo were republished on Saturday – produced in former fascist printing offices.[24]

“Similar moves were reported by the radio in Turin, Varese, Brescia and Vercelli.

“In Brescia – according to the Swiss broadcast – workers have been armed from the army arsenal and have established a workers’ militia, which took over the police authority – with little interference from the police.”

What are these “citizens’ committees” if not Soviets, which the cowardly and treacherous Stalinists are afraid to avow at the present time? These are living proofs that the Italian revolution has begun.

Whatever the vicissitudes of the Italian revolution in the next period the lie has been given to all the faint hearts and deserters, to all the cowards and sceptics.

The wonderful resilience and buoyancy, the tremendous powers of recuperation and recovery of the working class, the only through-and-through progressive class in modern society, has been demonstrated. The victories of reaction are shown to be built on shifting sands. After every defeat, the proletariat recovers from its wounds and rises again with even greater force to vanquish the enemy.

All these events have been crowded into the short space of a single week! The first stage of the revolution has seen the whole of industrial Italy on the march. For the moment the peasants are quiet. It will take some time for the meaning of the events in the towns to penetrate into the villages. But once he begins to understand, the peasant will turn with implacable hatred against his enemies. The fall of fascism will be interpreted by him, not only as the fall of the fascist official but as the beginning of the end for the landlord whom the officials represent. The peasants will begin, in isolated areas, sporadically to seize the land. Against the taxes and the landlord! These will be the rallying cries of the peasants.

All the factors that make for the socialist revolution in Italy are crystallizing out. The working class are forming their soviets and workers' militias. The soldiers (mostly peasants in uniform) are moving over to the side of the workers. The peasants will move forward. The middle class in the towns are turning towards the workers for a lead. All the objective conditions for a socialist revolution are present. And the taking of power by the Italian workers would instantly provoke the overthrow of Hitler and inaugurate the socialist revolution throughout Europe. All the conditions? No. The subjective conditions for the revolution are not yet present. Instinctively and almost automatically the Italian working class has taken the correct steps on the road to workers' power. But the socialists and Stalinists are already preparing to betray the movement by turning it into the channels of bourgeois "democracy".

Meanwhile, the "Allies" regard with not unmixed feelings the developments in Italy. Churchill's speech is a revelation of the fears and forebodings of the ruling class in the face of the revolution. His reference to the difficulty of conquering a

country mile by mile and the necessity to avoid rule through concentration camps and firing squads does not come from any tenderness towards the Italian workers but of fear of such measures. The old fox of the ruling class remembers with dread the fiasco of intervention against the Russian revolution after the last war. He wishes if possible, to avoid the same experience again. The ruling class is preparing a deal with the monarchy and the possessing classes in Italy. They hope, by a military occupation to nip the revolution in the bud before it has time to develop.

Whatever the developments in the next period, even if the military events should move more swiftly than the political developments in the Italian peninsula, Europe and the world will never be the same again. The fall of Mussolini is merely the rehearsal for the fall of Hitler. The news reports from Switzerland state that Mussolini's fall was greeted by demonstrations of the Italian workers in Berlin who burned pictures of Mussolini and all the symbols of fascism on bonfires. And what is important was the reaction of the German workers. In the factories which employed the Italians, they solidarised with them and joined the demonstrations, adding to the bonfires, portraits of Hitler and the Nazi flag. The police took no active steps against them. This is just a symptom of the situation in Germany which must break out in revolution.

But it is not only a question of Germany. The whole of European society has developed explosive potentialities during the war. The contradictions which have been piling up for more than two decades have reached their extreme limit; it requires merely one or two more sharp shocks to set the contradictions detonating in revolution. The news of Mussolini's fall immediately had its repercussions throughout Europe. Tremendous strikes have been announced in Portugal. Franco held emergency meetings of his cabinet as he felt the ground under his feet shake. Boris of Bulgaria waited fearfully to see if the revolts would begin. The Balkan countries are rotten-ripe for revolution. But it is not a question of this or that country. It is the whole continent of Europe that waits only for some beginning to burst forth in revolt from end to end.

The swaying fortunes of the war have produced the fantastic situation when with the defeat of Germany, there will not be a single belligerent country in Europe which to all practical purposes, will not be defeated. In 1918 the ruling class precariously balanced the smaller powers in the Balkans against one another. Though shaky, the Italian army, and the French especially, remained props of “law and order”, which could offset the countries in which revolution broke out. Today Giraud in North Africa and the Turks are being built as armies of counter-revolution. But these are weak reeds to lean on. With the collapse of the Nazi armies, there will not be a single army in Europe upon which the imperialists can rely for the purposes of counter-revolution. It is out of the question that the Red Army could be used for this purpose. Indeed, the coming revolution in the West would be the beginning of the end for Stalin and the bureaucracy. It could mean the beginning of the political revolution in Russia as well. To smash the revolution the British army would not be a reliable instrument, but would be liable to crack in the process. Only American imperialism has a fairly stable base and a backward army on which to rely. But for how long in the red-hot atmosphere of Europe? The American army would also disintegrate and decompose. We are on the verge of a revolutionary wave in Europe which will last for years and which will affect the whole world by its grandiose sweep.

### **“Spanish” warning to Italian workers**

It is on this background that the situation in Italy must be viewed. Even in the worst event – that of defeat of the revolution and military occupation – this is but the first uprising in Europe. An Allied or a German occupation of Italy might temporarily smash the movement. But to invade in a war and to intervene against a revolution are two different tasks. The Stalinists and social-democrats will attempt to guide the movement into popular front channels in the interests of Allied imperialism. The Spanish tragedy is the warning of where such policies will lead the Italian working class.

The Italian masses have placed themselves at the head of the revolutionary upsurge of all Europe. The honour which fell to the Russian proletariat in the last

war falls to them today. But Russia had a Bolshevik Party and a Bolshevik leadership. This alone guaranteed victory. It will be the task of the advanced workers in Italy to forge such a party in the fire of events. Tens of thousands of the heroic militants who continued the struggle against fascism despite everything are really Trotskyists, though the majority may never have heard that name. They will find the way to the programme of international socialism.

With the fresh breeze of the revolution blowing from across the Mediterranean, a new enthusiasm and a new resolve must pervade the activities of the advanced workers in Britain. Our tasks are complicated. Britain is one of the keys if not the key, to the revolution in Europe. The main task of the revolutionaries now consists in aiding the Italian workers by fighting against intervention against the revolution in Italy. To read the press of vile Stalinism on the Italian situation cannot but arouse a sense of disgust in any conscious socialist worker. Against these traitors! For the revolution in Italy! No intervention by British imperialism must be the rallying cry for the working class.

# **How Mussolini came to power**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 16, August 1943]

The downfall of Mussolini will be hailed with rejoicing by the working class throughout the world. His regime of blood and terror against the masses has endured for 21 years. The ending of fascism in Italy, the country of its origin, will be the first step towards the socialist revolution in Italy and throughout the world. But only if the Italian workers and the workers of Europe and Britain learn the lessons of history. To do so the working class must understand the reasons for the victory of fascism, how it arose and why it was enabled to conquer power.

Italy, although on the side of the victorious powers in the last war, came out of the struggle economically weakened. France and Britain seized the lion's share of the territorial gains and left Italy only with desert and infertile acquisitions. All the burdens of the war were placed on the shoulders of the masses of workers and peasants, and of the middle class.

Like the workers and peasants of all Europe who had become disillusioned with capitalism which allowed the big combines and banks to amass enormous fortunes out of the war at the expense of the blood and suffering of the masses, the Italian workers and peasants were disgusted with capitalism and its wars for profits, markets and raw materials. They had in front of them the example of the Russian workers and peasants who had overthrown capitalism, and, for the first time in history, had expropriated the capitalists and established a workers'



government.

Immediately that war ended and the Italian capitalists launched their attacks on the standard of living of the masses a tremendous revolutionary ferment began in all sections of the exploited classes in Italy. The workers and peasants strove to emulate the example of the Russian workers and peasants. In *Fascism and Big Business*, Daniel Guerin describes the turmoil in Italy thus:

“In Italy, after the war, there was a real revolutionary upsurge of the masses. Workers and peasants, although they were not mature enough to address themselves to the conquest of power, at least were militant enough to force big concessions. Industrial workers got better wages, the eight hour day, general recognition of collective contracts, and a voice in production through factory committees. One strike followed another: 1,663 in 1919; 1,881 in 1920. In Genoa and other big sea-ports, the solidly organised dock workers won out over the shipowners. The steel workers did even better: in September 1920, they broadened a simple wage dispute into a large scale class struggle. When the big industrialists resorted to a lock-out, 600,000 Italian metal workers occupied the mills and carried on production themselves through their own elected shop committees. They opened their safes and discovered secrets, so closely guarded, of cost prices and profits... They won the fight: they were given – on paper, anyway – the right to check up on management and ‘workers’ control’.

“The peasantry showed no less fighting spirit. Returning from the trenches, they demanded the ‘division of the land’ which had been promised them, and, when it was not forthcoming, they occupied the coveted soil. A governmental decree sanctioned the *fait accompli*: on condition that they organise themselves into co-operatives, they obtained the right to remain four years on the lands they had spontaneously occupied (*Visochi* decree, September 2 1919). The tenant farmers also succeeded in improving the terms of their leases. The agricultural day labourers formed strong unions, the famous ‘Red Leagues’, backed up by the rural communes, won over to socialism, which had become so many proletarian fiefs. They bargained with the great landowners as one power with another,

forcing from them union agreements, etc.”

By their occupation of the factories the workers demonstrated their desire to finish capitalism once and for all and to take power in order to do so. But the labour and trade union leaders sabotaged the struggle of the working class; ordered the workers out of the factories and exhorted the workers to stick to “constitutional” means in the struggle against capitalism. In face of the revolutionary offensive of the working class, the capitalists were powerless to resist. But the Socialist leaders, curbing and breaking the movement of the masses, saved capitalism in Italy from destruction. The Communist Party (although not yet degenerated into Stalinism) was incapable of playing a role in events, as it was too immature and weak and suffered from all the infantile diseases of leftism, refusing to attempt a united front with the Socialists, standing on the basis of ultra-leftism, and anti-parliamentarianism and thus dooming itself to isolation from the masses.

The revolutionary upsurge of the masses thus failed to overthrow capitalism. After weathering the storm by giving concessions to the workers and peasants, and having received a terrible shock, the capitalists began to prepare for their revenge against the workers.

“In Genoa at the beginning of April, 1919, the big industrialists and landowners sealed a holy alliance for the fight against ‘Bolshevism’. ‘This gathering,’ Rossi wrote, ‘is the first step towards a reorganisation of capitalist forces to meet the threatening situation.’ On March 7, 1920, the first nationwide conference of industrialists was held at Milan, and the General Federation of Industry was created. An all-embracing and detailed plan of joint action was drawn up, covering everything including the strategy of the campaign against the labour unions. Shortly after, on August 18, the General Federation of Agriculture was formed. Industrialists and landowners will no longer enter the battle with scattered forces.” (Fascism and Big Business)

For the purpose of fighting against the unions and the workers' organisations the big industrialists began to organise, arm and finance bands of thugs and hooligans to fight against the working class. Just as in Britain, [where] the capitalists had begun to subsidise Mosley and his gangsters.

“...at the end of 1920, they furnished Benito Mussolini the means to carry on in his paper, the Popolo d'Italia, now a journal with a big circulation, a noisy campaign for naval and air armaments. In the issue of December 23, Mussolini announced that he was going to campaign ‘for a foreign policy of expansion’.” (Fascism and Big Business)

In the beginning these gangs were being used for the purpose merely of terrorising the workers amid murdering the militant leaders of their organisations. But the economic situation went from bad to worse. In January 1921 there were 600,000 unemployed. The middle class, the small shopkeepers, students, the professional classes, ex-servicemen, and the youth found themselves ruined and impoverished by the economic crisis. They began to look for a way out of the agony and suffering which capitalism had imposed on them. Meanwhile, while the unions and other working class organisations continued to exist, the capitalists, who were savagely attacking the standards of the workers and peasants and taking back all the concessions gained by their struggles, could not drive them to the starvation pittance which was necessary for the continued existence of the system. The capitalists saw the only way out in the destruction of the organisations, rights and liberties of the working class. Mussolini was financed and helped to organise the Fascist Party.

Taking advantage of the cowardice and treachery of the Socialist leaders who failed to put forward a radical programme for power, the magnates of big business subsidised the Fascists who put forward a demagogic anti-capitalist programme to suit the demands of the middle class. The middle class, failing to receive a lead from the workers and their organisations, in sheer despair supported the programme put forward by the fascists. As Guerin explains the situation:

“After the war a rather large section of the battered middle classes placed their hope in socialism. In the 1919 election, the ballots of the petty bourgeois were cast with those of the workers in greater numbers than ever before. When the metal workers occupied the factories in 1920, they had the sympathy of a great part of the petty bourgeoisie. But the Socialist Party showed itself absolutely incapable of leading the revolutionary upsurge of the masses. Instead of placing itself at their head, it dragged in their wake. In Mussolini’s own words, it did not know how ‘to profit from a revolutionary situation such as history does not repeat’.”

Mussolini began to organise his thugs, with the full assistance of the monarchy, the army, the landowners and capitalists. A veritable reign of terror was instituted against the masses. While the fascists were busy organising their murder raids against the workers and their organisations, the workers resistance was paralysed by their leaders. Mussolini and his hoodlums were enabled to march against the workers’ with impunity, while their leaders preached the necessity to rely on the “State” and the Constitution, at a time when the police and the heads of the army and the state machine were giving every encouragement and support to the fascists.

It was in this atmosphere of workers’ confusion and demoralisation that the capitalists placed Mussolini in power to retain their organisations and rights, [missing line] even if in an attenuated form, at the present time. But they will suffer the same fate as the Italian and German workers if they do not profit by their experiences.

Capitalism in its decay breeds fascism and to support the capitalist class is to make certain its victory. Not only fascism but a super-fascism will be imposed on the workers if capitalism is allowed to continue to exist. Only the building of a new revolutionary socialist party which has learned the lessons of the defeats of the workers in Europe can lead to a victory over the forces of fascism and reaction: the forces of capitalism. The advanced workers of Europe and Britain

will find their way to the ranks of the Fourth International which alone can lead the toilers to a world of socialism and peace and thus guarantee the impossibility of the recurrence of the barbarism of fascism and war.

# **Aid the Italian revolution!**

**Land to the peasants!**

**Factories to the workers!**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 17, Mid-August 1943]

The fall of Mussolini poses many questions before the workers of Italy and the world. What sort of revolution is beginning in the Italian peninsula? What is the meaning of the Badoglio regime? Is the revolution in Italy a “democratic” one and what are the perspectives for the revolution? All these questions immediately spring to the mind of socialist workers.

The events of the past fortnight have been the means of elucidating what is taking place, in spite of the trickle of news which is allowed to leave Italy. Within twenty-four hours of the news of the resignation Mussolini, the workers in Italy had razed the Fascist Party to its foundations. It was not safe to appear in the streets with a black shirt or any other fascist emblems. Thus the masses demonstrated their hatred of fascism. In spite of the persecutions of Badoglio and the Italian capitalists, the fall of Mussolini was the signal for an upsurge on the part of the working class. Instinctively, the workers have begun to take the first steps of the revolution – the socialist revolution. Workers’ committees – i.e., soviets – have sprung up in the Northern industrial cities overnight. Beginning with Brescia, the arsenal city, the workers have seized arms and founded an

armed workers' militia. In various cities the soldiers have refused to fire on the workers, and in Milan they have sent their delegates to the soviets, where also, significantly enough, the peasants of the surrounding district are also represented.

All these moves indicate that unconsciously, and unclearly perhaps, but nevertheless decisively, the workers have taken the road of the socialist revolution. In Russia the revolution began in a similar fashion. The contradictions of Tsarism had reached an unbearable pitch and fearing revolution from the masses, certain strata of the ruling class attempted a "palace revolution" from above to prevent revolution from below, a conspiracy which was indicated by the murder of Rasputin by certain members of the nobility attached to the Tsarist court. In the same way the ruling classes in Italy had become convinced of the uselessness of fascism as a repressive means of keeping the masses under control and of duping them; feeling the tremors of the revolution which have been shaking Italy they also have attempted to save themselves by a "palace revolution". The difference between Italy and Russia lies in the fact that the palace revolution has been carried out in Italy. But this does not alter anything fundamental, but merely gives events a different direction and a different form.

The idea of the Italian ruling class was to dispense with the inflated and exploded demagogue whom they used as a mask and resort to a plain military dictatorship, with rule by the army and with the king as a figurehead.

Badoglio's record and that of his backers indicates that in essence there is no real difference between him and Mussolini. The same forces that supported and financed Mussolini are still in control in Italy today. The monarchy, the Church, the landowners and capitalists are behind Badoglio. Badoglio himself revealed his position when he said, in an interview with the French journalist, André Rabache:

"I am an Italian, before anything else. I am proud to have made my King an

Emperor. I am grateful to the Duce for everything he has done to facilitate the military task he entrusted to me. Mussolini is a great man. It is time that was recognised in London and Paris. Tell your readers this; it is your first duty. For myself, I will serve Mussolini right to the end, for Mussolini serves His Majesty.”

This interview took place in his special train between Naples and Rome, when he returned from the Abyssinian campaign newly entitled the Duke of Addis Ababa. Later in Tripoli, Badoglio told the same reporter:

“All your journalists’ questions on Franco-Italian relations forget a factor of prime importance: you have much too many communists in your country. France’s neighbours, in Africa as in Europe, above all, protect themselves from that poison... Let us give thanks to heaven and to the farsightedness of His Majesty that there is amongst us a man who has protected Italy against the corrupting revolution...”

“If you follow us, the four principle powers of Europe will at last recognise the truth; that of a civilisation founded on capitalism, on intellectual worth and the necessary social privileges of the ruling classes.”

The same irresistible pressure of the masses, the same crisis which caused the fall of Mussolini, is continuing in Italy today. With the difference that now the safety valve has burst. The Badoglio government cannot solve any of the problems which face Italy. It is, and can only be, a reactionary stop-gap government. Already it is compelled to announce the bankruptcy of Italy – a legacy bequeathed by Mussolini – and the necessity for a further increase in the price of goods. The measures announced can only mean a tremendous inflation and a worsening of the already intolerable standards of the masses, reduced to below subsistence level by 20 years of fascism. It is clear that the awakening masses will not stand for this long. The Badoglio government will reveal itself as completely incapable of coping with the position.



The situation that is developing in Italy is similar to that after the February revolution in Russia. The masses are just becoming conscious of their power. With a strong revolutionary socialist party and a strong leadership, the Italian workers would become conscious of their strivings and would move to take power into their own hands. This alone could solve the problems of Italian society. In Russia in 1917 the Bolsheviks solved the problem posed by history by leading the Russian workers to a victorious conclusion of the revolution, by overthrowing the corrupt ruling class and organising society on a new foundation.

The Badoglio government came to power at a peculiar stage of the war. It represents an attempt on the part of the Italian capitalists to come to an agreement with the Allies and save something from the wreckage of the war. Badoglio himself and the whole of the Italian ruling class realise that the present regime cannot last long in face of the virtual collapse of the economic system in Italy, already foreshadowed by the drastic decrees which have been announced. These measures can only add fuel to the smouldering discontent of all the exploited. The peasants, the workers, the middle class, all already hopelessly ruined by fascism, will find their conditions aggravated by the new impositions of the capitalists. Already the decrees have provoked panic among the middle class, who have commenced a run on the banks with the development of inflation which will wipe out their “savings.”

That is why the Italian capitalists are preparing for some sort of deal with the Allied imperialists, if possible. To save themselves from their own people they must have the backing of foreign bayonets – whether those of Hitler or those of the Allies is immaterial to them. What they are attempting to do is to drive the best bargain they can in the interests of the ruling class. And since they see the writing on the wall for Hitler, they are endeavouring to do a deal with the Allies.

Caught between the hammer of the Allied armies and the anvil of German imperialism, the revolution in Italy is in danger of being crushed. But even so,

Hitler and Churchill have regarded the movement of the masses with alarm and fear. Roosevelt's speech, Churchill's speech, Eisenhower's behaviour – the activities of AMGOT[25] – all indicate their desire to save the ruling class in Italy and even the wretched monarchy from paying the historic penalty for their crimes.

## **Policies of the working-class parties**

On this background and the internal situation in Italy itself, what the workers of Italy and the international working class need is a clear understanding of the problems which face them and a clear solution. When we examine the programme of the workers' parties in Italy and their international counterparts, we see their criminal treachery and their incapacity to face up to the situation.

The Italian Socialist Party has issued a Manifesto in which they have correctly called for the overthrow of Badoglio and the king by a general strike and have castigated the "liberal" editors in Italy who have been agitating against a change of the present government. But this is what they say:

"We are of the opinion that the fascist monarchy deserves to have unconditional surrender imposed upon it as demanded by the Allies.

"We appeal to the democratic powers, to conduct peace negotiations with delegates of the Italian people on the basis of the Atlantic Charter."

As if the "aims" of the Allies had anything to do with "democracy" or anything else except the struggle for profits, for markets, for raw materials and spheres of influence. And as though Wall Street and the City of London did not back

Mussolini and Italian fascism right up to their clash of interests in the war.

Mussolini broke with Churchill and Roosevelt and not the reverse. Roosevelt's and Churchill's speeches demonstrated that they are prepared to do a deal with the House of Savoy and Badoglio, or possibly Umberto or Grandi[26] or some similar combination tomorrow, if it suits their interests. Thus the Italian Socialist Party attempts to differentiate between Tweedledum and Tweedledee – between the Allied capitalists and the Italian. No programme of demands for the workers and peasants of Italy – just a vague demand for democratic rights and liberties. What will the “unconditional surrender” mean for the Italian masses? It would mean nothing short of a military dictatorship with the same gang of capitalists in control; it would mean the bleeding of the Italian masses not only by Italian capitalism but by Allied capitalism as well. Thus the Italian socialists prepare a new debacle for the Italian workers and peasants.

The policy of Stalinism in Italy would seem incredible were it not for the crimes they have already committed in China, Germany, France and Spain against the socialist revolution. For they indignantly repudiate any suggestion that they stand for socialism or the social revolution in Italy. The Marxian analysis of the class forces in Italy is deliberately abandoned; in place of the classes they place the Italian “nation”, whose main job is to throw out not the Nazis – but the Germans.

The Daily Worker says on August 10th:

“They [the communists] are fighting in the ranks of the movement in the interests of the nation, and to see to it that the movement does not come to a standstill until the nation's claims and urgent needs are satisfied.”

The same issue of the Daily Worker reports with satisfaction that the Italian

parties from “conservative to communist” in Italy have agreed to the composition of a “left bourgeois” government if Badoglio should fall. “The suggested government would have a left bourgeois character.”

Thus these traitors prepare for the Italian workers, the same fate as the workers suffered in France and Spain through the alliance with the capitalists in the so-called “people’s front.”

In Italy such a policy is particularly pernicious. It was the liberals who smoothed the way for Mussolini to come to power in 1920-1922. The CP has not a word to say against the real culprits of fascism, the big capitalists and landowners, the generals and bankers, who placed Mussolini in power. Thus they prepare the way for a new and worse tyranny over the Italian masses by these same forces. In addition to that, they picture the Allies as “democrats” and “liberators”. This is tantamount to preparing the way for a stab in the back against the Italian workers, and peasants. There is no crime too despicable for these contemptible lackeys!

The position of the British Labour leaders and the British Stalinists is just as bad, if not worse. All that the National Council of Labour can do is to follow in the footsteps of their masters and screech: “unconditional surrender.” Not a word about defending the interests of socialism in Italy against any attack. The CP naturally screeches louder in the accents of chauvinism, repeating the same theme, in a more jingoistic and hysterical manner. And they too have not a word explaining the actions and meaning of the movement of the Italian working class and peasantry.

The ILP has also failed at the first serious test of the revolution in Europe. While calling for the socialist revolution in Europe and for the British working class to rally to the support of the Italian workers and peasants, they do not understand the tasks clearly. Their position would obviously appeal to workers, when compared to the perfidy of the Stalinist and Labour organisations. But just

because of this, it can be fatal for the Italian and British workers. Fenner Brockway[27] writes in the New Leader of August 7th:

“There were two Italian socialist parties before the war – one affiliated to the Second International, the other (the maximalists) to our international centre. At the time of the split our section had a majority, but in emigration its resources were small compared with the influentially backed, more moderate section, and it is impossible to say which retained greater support in Italy itself. I think it likely that under present circumstances the breach will be healed; certainly the majority of Italian socialists, who have a great revolutionary tradition, will regard any popular front as temporary, and will press on towards the full socialist revolution.”

And further on, Brockway states:

“Just before the downfall of Mussolini I attended a gathering of Italian Socialists in London. They belonged to the Second International section, but, nevertheless, were outspoken in their criticism of Allied policy as already revealed in Sicily. They pointed out that whilst the Fascist Party and fascist militia had been dissolved, there was no indication that the fascist political and economic administration had been destroyed. Fascist mayors and officials remained in office, fascist barons were still the lords of the peasants and fascist industrialists still the bosses of factories and mines. At the same time, political activity by the people to end the regime was prohibited. Was dictatorship to continue under the Allies? they asked.”

Thus, just at the moment when clarity is essential for the Italian and British workers, the ILP confuses the issues. Brockway correctly warns: “But the socialist revolution faces formidable odds. Within Italy it will be opposed by the remnants of the fascists, the near-fascists, the monarchists and the reactionary catholics. It will also have to meet two external enemies – the Nazis and Allied capitalism.” He then goes on to say that Allied and German imperialism are

terrible dangers for the Italian revolution. True! And it is to the credit of the ILP that they expose British imperialism. But just as dangerous to the Italian masses is the programme of Stalinism and reformism. Brockway's article and the New Leader does not contain one single word of warning against the counter-revolutionary role of Social Democracy and Stalinism. In spite of the tragic experience of his brother party POUM in Spain, he advocates "unity" with the reformists! Not only that but he airily vouches for the good will of the Italian Socialists, who will not stop at the popular front stage. As Brockway has referred to the Kerensky "popular front" period, perhaps it would not be out of place to remind him that had Lenin followed such policies in Russia, there would have been no Russian Revolution and the Russian masses would have suffered the fate of the workers of Spain.

It would be the duty of any party claiming to be revolutionary socialist, to sharply differentiate its policy, from that of reformism. Brockway characterises the role of the Allies correctly. The Italian Socialists appeal to these same Allies for support in setting up "democracy" in Italy, they call for unconditional surrender to these same Allies, they support Allied imperialism in the war. But this means nothing to Brockway. He still believes in collaboration in the same party with these Allied flunkies. If the Italian workers and peasants follow the advice of Brockway, they will have their necks broken by the counterrevolution. At every crisis nationally and internationally the ILP shows its true character. It is not a revolutionary but a centrist, half-reformist party. Tomorrow in the British revolution it will itself behave in the same way as it suggests to its brother parties. ILP workers should seriously reconsider our criticism of their policy in the light of this crisis.

Only the programme of the Fourth International can stand the supreme test of the revolution. Our programme says: No support for Allied imperialism in its intervention against the Italian revolution! Tomorrow the British and American capitalists will attempt to make a deal with Badoglio, or some other lesser known Badoglio. The Italian workers, soldiers and peasants can rely only on their own independent forces, their own strength; their own militias and their own soviets in the struggle against the Italian capitalist class. Only by appealing to the class instincts of the Allied and German workers and soldiers can they

receive any international support and solidarity. But to do this they must advance to take power into their own hands. The struggle in Italy must be waged round the demand for the rights of free speech, press and organisation unconditionally! For the overthrow of Badoglio and the king!

And those who organised, armed and financed fascism must not escape from the consequences of their crimes. The big landowners and capitalists put Mussolini in power – they must be expropriated! Never again must these gangsters have the opportunity to decide the fate of the workers and peasants. Land to the peasants! Factories to the workers! Peace to the peoples! For the international solidarity of the working class! Against all capitalists and their governments! This must be the rallying programme of the Italian workers and peasants! Only thus can they conquer.

The workers have taken the first instinctive steps in this direction. But they did so in France and Spain and were then diverted by the Stalinists, the Socialists and the ILPists into the channels of the peoples' front. What the masses need above all is a revolutionary policy. That policy is provided only by the Fourth International.

Events will move quickly. It may be that the Italian revolution will be strangled by the imperialists from without and the traitors from within. But it is to the immortal glory of the Italian workers that they have begun. Europe and the world will never be the same again. Tomorrow it will be Hitler's turn or the turn of the Balkans. The European socialist revolution is on the order of the day. We salute the heroic workers, peasants and soldiers of Italy. The workers of Europe and Britain have a dress rehearsal for what is to come. All parties and programmes have been tested in the fire of revolution. Only the Fourth International has stood the test! Under its banner the workers of Europe and Britain will conquer and build a new world, the socialist united states of Europe.

# **Anglo-US strategy Weaken Russia!**

**By Ted Grant (not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 18, September 1943]

Four years of war and millions of men have destroyed incalculable wealth and blasted each other to death. Rotterdam, Coventry, London, Hamburg, Berlin, Stalingrad, Turin and Milan and dozens more of the great cities of Europe which were built by centuries of labour, [have been] blasted, ravished and ruined by the nightly pounding of the bombs and guns.

Four years of war, famine and disease destroys and weakens the peoples of Europe and Asia, conquered and governed by brutal military power.

Four years! First the fortunes of war smiled on Germany and her Axis satellites, now it is the turn of the Anglo-American bloc. Russia, almost entirely unaided, climbs out of the depths of history's bloodiest defeats and slaughters and can no longer be destroyed by military means.

Four years of black reaction and now the first days of the dawn. Revolution in Italy; unrest in Europe – a new day in history, revolutionary history begins!

No country has escaped the effects of the war. Few are not immediately involved



in the bloodshed and massacre.

In Nazi Germany, the anti-capitalist demagoguery of Hitler is bared. Monopoly capitalism, whom Nazism serves, has piled up the most gigantic fortunes and stores of loot that has been known in German history. But in four years, the living conditions of the masses has steadily declined.

To create these fortunes, millions of German workers have toiled, sweated, fought and died: and become objects of hatred to the oppressed peoples of Europe. The “living space” for which the German masses are asked to die, becomes a grave for the workers and peasants of Europe. German capitalism thrives like a ghoul amongst the graves.

In democratic Britain and America “everyone must sacrifice”! But behind this fraud, the same situation as in Germany: monopoly capitalism dictates government policy, monopoly capitalism piles up super profits, monopoly capitalism dictates the life of the nation.

Democratic slogans! Yes; but more reactionary and totalitarian legislation for the masses. Sacrifice for the workers, but increased loot for the ruling class. “Freedom for Europe” tomorrow, but military dictatorship in India, the colonies and the “reconquered” countries today. The politics of monopoly capitalism, democratic and fascist, are based on the protection of property [and] the protection of the right to exploit and make profit. The political slogans are formulated and adapted from one day to another only to suit that end.

Fascism, as a mass political creed in Europe, has been destroyed by four years of war. Nazis, fascists, quislings, all are intensely hated as a breed, a tendency and an ideological political bloc. Yesterday and today the fascists ruled, tomorrow the workers and small farmers will present a heavy bill for fascist rule to its

inspirers and organisers.

Of voluntary collaboration from the masses, of fraternity between Europe's nations, the New Order has none. The whip; the firing squad: these are its organs of rule. Even the relative freedom of the satellite countries is now being destroyed by the demands of total war.

“Democracy” which suppresses the national aspirations of colonial millions; which links arms with fascists and neo-fascists, with Darlans and Girauds; which seeks to lean on Badoglio to retain the House of Savoy; “democracy,” which could not prevent the war, nor unemployment, nor crisis, which allows monopoly capitalism to remain in control of the nation's wealth and loot the treasury in the midst of a bloody war – that type of democracy is being questioned by millions throughout the world. In Australia, Canada, Ireland, Britain, parliamentary figures tell their tale. In America, North and South, labour is on the march. Labour's turn to the left is a world turn and will have world shaking results.

For the past two years, Churchill and Roosevelt have lavished fulsome praise upon the Soviet Union... and some arms. The policy of Anglo-American imperialism has revealed itself as dictated by class aims, economic and political.

These pseudo democrats hoped that Russia would be destroyed by Germany after a bloody and exhausting war. Two birds would be killed with the one stone and they would emerge on top. With the workers' state destroyed and their German capitalist rival bled to death, peace would result in victory and a strengthening of their domination and control.

This programme, though denied, was blurted out by the impetuous and indiscreet Moore-Brabazon two years ago or more. In the Sunday Observer of August 29th,

the editorial columnist once again lifts the screen, praising the brilliant strategical leadership of Churchill which has resulted in the exhaustion and decline of Germany at small cost... to Britain!

After Quebec, Churchill spoke and gave a clear picture of the policy and future military strategy of the Allies and their essential economic and political aims for the future. No military aid to Russia until the policy of Britain and America with their precise definitions of a carved up Europe has been accepted by Stalin and military intervention suits their imperialist aims.

Behind Churchill's statement: that a military front such as Stalin demands will not be dictated by political considerations but by military strategy, lies a great and definite lie. For the refusal to open such a front is dictated precisely by the class, political antagonism between Soviet Russia, a degenerated workers' state, and her allies, countries controlled by the capitalist class.

They lie who say that there is no conflict. They do a disservice to the tolling masses and to the Soviet Union who cover up this conflict. For behind the half concealed discussions and debates and open propaganda, secret diplomatic discussions to decide the carve up and dictate the economic and political future of Europe and the world are taking place.

Out with it! The masses must demand an end to the secret diplomatic talks. Expose it, for it is reaction's tool. Labour must demand a clear and open statement of the basis of this conflict and take a hand in deciding what has to be done.

The turning of the energy of the Allies against Japan is a sign that they are waiting for a further weakening of Soviet Russia. The campaign against Japan underlines the fact that the only genuine allies of the workers' state are the

working class.

For four years, the destiny of millions has been in the hands of capitalist governments, apart from the Soviet Union. Stalin's bureaucratic policy, in spite of the fact that Soviet Russia is a workers' state, has helped the capitalists to control and mislead the people. But the fifth year will usher in a new period of social alignments and political struggles. For reaction is giving place to revolution. The masses will have the last word!

In this period the working class need clear ideas and a revolutionary programme. Above all they need an international socialist party to carry that programme into effect.

To defend the Soviet Union, not only from her enemies and "allies" but from the false bureaucratic policies of Stalinism, is a first duty of the working class. To do so the workers must find their independence as a class.

Only the Fourth International – the world party of socialist revolution – has the policy which faces up to all the demands of our epoch.

## Rift widens in Allied camp

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 19, Mid-September 1943]

The conflict between the Soviet Union and the Allied imperialists sharpens. The capitalists recognise that if the Red Army reaches the borders of the Balkan states the peoples will rise in revolt, whether Stalin desires this or not. Therefore the Allies are attempting to get their troops there before the Red Army. Although they have sufficient preponderance of war materials to establish a second front, their attention is concentrated where their class interests are endangered.

The unparalleled victories of the Red Army constitutes a factor of world-shaking importance. It can be compared to the victories of Napoleon in the wars which France waged against feudal Europe. The achievements of the Red Army can only be understood when it is considered that Russia has lost more territory than any of the other participants in the war.

*Reynolds News of August 30 1943 writes:*

“Her [Russia’s] losses are colossal; a third of her population gone, a third of her food supply, more than a third of her railway network and far more than a third of her coal, iron and steel.”

Yet in spite of the terrible defeats and suffering, the Red Army has rallied as no other army in the world could have done in the face of such defeats.

One of the factors of course, which has led to the changed position, has been that Stalin has been compelled to remove the nonentities and lackeys without military merit, whom he had placed in control of the army solely because of their subservience to him. Timoshenko, Voroshilov and Budenny have been placed in unimportant positions in the rear, while new generals have been pushed to the forefront – Rokossovsky, Zhukov, Malinovsky and others, and it is they who have gained the victories[28]. But these victories, in the last analysis, can only be traced to the immense material and psychological advantages given by the October revolution. Not only in peacetime economy, but in the field of battle, despite the bureaucratic leadership, nationalised industry has demonstrated its superiority over capitalism. It is here that world imperialism has completely miscalculated. Hitler and the whole world had thought that Germany, especially with the resources of all Europe at her disposal, would defeat the Soviet Union though it would require hard battles to do it.

The ruling class of Britain and America had constantly been manoeuvring in pre-war diplomacy to ensure that Hitler should attack the Soviet Union and were overjoyed when Hitler plunged into this adventure. They hoped to achieve the defeat of the Soviet Union and simultaneously to weaken their German rivals so that they would be enabled to destroy their power without too much effort. That was the programme incautiously blurted out by Moore-Brabazon and his American counterparts.

That the Allied imperialists were attempting to carry this programme into effect is demonstrated by an article in the Russian paper War and the Working Class which is now openly revealing the differences that have been developing between Russia and her Allies.

The victories of the Soviet Union have impelled Stalin to become somewhat

bolder and to blurt out the truth. The Times of September 3rd, remarks in commenting on an article in War and the Working Class:

“One American commentator, the review says, was in favour of a prolonged war of exhaustion. This it declares was too reminiscent of the ‘philosophy’ of those who saw nothing bad in this gigantic conflict in which not only Germany is becoming exhausted but the Soviet Union as well.”

### **Soviet-imperialist conflict**

But here, once again, despite the exhaustion of the Soviet Union, the calculations of the imperialists have not worked out. The soviet armies are advancing in a series of brilliant victories and posing new problems before the imperialists. To attack the Soviet Union now would be risky because of fear of the repercussions it would have among the masses in Britain and America and because of the complicated position of the imperialists in Europe and Asia. For the present the imperialists still regard the existence of the Soviet Union as unfinished business to be attended to in the future. Tucked away as a minor item in the Daily Worker of September 7th; appeared the following:

“A friend who is working in a government research establishment, in which there is a department concerned with research on metals for use in gun manufacture, writes to me: ‘From time to time high Army officials come down to discuss progress and arrange for particular lines of research work. Recently some more Army officials came down and were urging that a certain line of research be undertaken that would last 10 to 15 years. When it was suggested that it would not be of much use to the present war effort the Army officials said, quite seriously: “We have the Russians to take care of after this war you know”.’”

As is to be expected, these renegades from socialism make no comment and draw no political conclusions from this.

But it is clear [that] the imperialists regard with alarm and dismay the unforeseen strength which the Soviet Union has revealed. If the Soviet Union were under a genuine revolutionary leadership, the position of world capitalism would be hopeless. The Red Army advance would prepare the way for the socialist revolution in Germany and Europe and its repercussions would be felt in every country on the globe. Here it is that the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism renders invaluable aid to the imperialists. Stalin is in mortal terror of the socialist revolution in any country of the world, for fear of the consequences it would have on the Russian masses. Under stress of such an example the victorious Russian workers and peasants would soon move to restore the workers' democracy of Lenin and Trotsky.

### **Basic conflict remains**

In the Daily Mail of July 16th, an article by Demaree Bess says:

“It is also not only futile but downright pernicious to imagine the United Nations as one big happy family, fighting precisely the same wars for precisely the same objectives.”

It is this conflict of interests and its fundamental antagonism toward the Soviet Union which dictates the policy of the ruling class of Britain and America. This antagonism determines the strategy of the Allies once again confirming the Leninist axiom that war is merely the continuation of politics by forcible means. It is obvious that the Allies have now a sufficient preponderance of arms over Germany to establish a second front, even if at great sacrifice, in Western Europe, if their main aim had been to assist their Soviet “allies”. But their



attention is concentrated elsewhere. They are concerned over the division of interests in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. They are looking towards this area with anxiety as the Russian armies sweep on towards the Dnieper.

### **A dash for the borders**

The ruling class of all countries recognises that if the Red Army reached the borders of the Balkan States it would inevitably provoke an uprising among the Balkan peoples, whether Stalin desires this or not, and in spite of any efforts of the Russian bureaucracy to prevent it. Therefore the “Allies” are desirous of their troops reaching this area before those of the Red Army. The gangster reactionaries in control of Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria are only waiting for a suitable opportunity to do a Darlan or a Badoglio[29], turn themselves into “democrats” and make a deal with Anglo-American imperialism. They would regard this as a protection against their own masses and against the Soviet Union. But though the Russian bureaucracy do not desire revolution in Europe, they also do not desire an Anglo-American domination of Eastern Europe which could not but be transformed into an iron ring round the borders of Russia in preparation for a clash in the future. The Stalinist bureaucracy is insisting that Eastern Europe should become a Soviet sphere of influence. The new prominence given to the Orthodox Church in Russia from the point of view of foreign policy is meant not only to reassure the American imperialists that Stalinism is now completely reactionary, but as a means of exerting influence on the reactionary elements among the Slav peoples in Eastern Europe, while also reassuring the ruling class in this area that Stalin is desirous of coming to an agreement with them. While constantly reiterating that they do not desire revolution, just as insistently the Russian press reveals the fear of Western imperialism in the future.

Stalin is insisting that the Allies should abandon their opposition to the incorporation of the Baltic States, of the former Polish Ukraine, Bessarabia and Bukovina – and the positions obtained in Finland – into the Soviet Union. Not only that. But that they should cease to plot and scheme to organise Eastern

Europe as an Anglo-American sphere of influence which would be directly aimed as a springboard against the Soviet Union.

At a period when the Soviet troops were hard-pressed and it appeared as if the German army would succeed in breaking through to Baku, the Russian government apparently appealed to her “Allies” for military assistance. But instead of granting such assistance, the British proposed to place their troops in the oil region of Baku and Tiflis [Tbilisi].

Here is how the Daily Worker reports the situation in a quotation from War and the Working Class:

“In spite of repeated proposals from the Soviet side, the Allies did not at any time express a desire to keep their troops side-by-side with our army and air force on the Soviet-German frontier.”

“Last autumn a proposal was made to station Allied air forces at Baku and Tiflis, where no front existed and where no battles could be fought with the Germans.

“Is it not clear that it would have been better to station them somewhere nearer the front, where they would be in a position to help our troops?”

“Also,” concludes the article, “could a proposal to transfer Soviet troops from the Trans-Caucasus to the Soviet-German front so that non-Soviet troops could be brought into this area be regarded as a desire to fight side-by-side with the Red Army?” (Daily Worker, September 3 1943).

This proposed disposal of “Allied” troops was not dictated by the needs of assisting the Soviet Union but by the desire of the British ruling class to grab the rich oil areas of Russia in the event that the Red Army was defeated.

The clash of interests, the secret intrigues and deals once again come to the surface with the sudden announcement of the Polish government in London that “their” territory, i.e. those areas brutally seized in 1920 from Russia, must remain under the domination of the Polish landlords and capitalists. This statement must have been made by prior agreement or consultation with Anglo-American imperialism.

There is also the prolonged stay of Mr Churchill in Washington in which ceaseless military and political discussions have taken place. The capitalist press has openly stated that relations with Russia was one of the most important, if not the most important, item at the conference. And this question must obviously loom foremost in the minds of the imperialists as the key question for the coming period. It is on this background that the Times has featured extracts from the Russian journal War and the Working Class, new unofficial organ whereby Stalinist diplomacy expresses its aims and aspirations:

“...attacks [in America] on Mr Churchill for ‘not liquidating the British Empire’ and on the Soviet Union for ‘wanting to Bolshevise Central Europe’ are cited as examples of untimely utopianism.”

Behind cringing offers of cooperation and the expression of “eagerness of the Soviet government to collaborate with their principal allies in the post-war era” is the fear of the real plans of imperialism:

“...Plans for the establishment of an Eastern European federation hostile to the Soviet Union can be framed, but only by renouncing the necessity for friendship

and collaboration between the USSR and the Allies in the post-war period, only if the renunciation of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty is considered.

“...None of the problems of post-war organisation can or must be settled without the direct and active participation of the Soviet Union.”

The internal reaction in Russia, the plans of world imperialism, all these demonstrate that the Soviet Union cannot be saved for socialism by the glorious victories of the Red Army alone. It is possible that Stalin may patch up some sort of agreement with Roosevelt and Churchill, or in desperation he may attempt an agreement with German imperialism, but such agreements cannot be long-lasting. The Hitler-Stalin pact did not last even two years. The Anglo-Russian pact is already trembling in the balance.

Neither the safety of the Soviet Union nor peace for the rest of the world can be assured if world imperialism continues to exist. Only the victory of the socialist revolution in Europe can save the Soviet Union for socialism and ensure peace and plenty for the tortured peoples of Europe and the world.

# Churchill's speech marks a new stage in the war

By Ted Grant

[Draft article, late September 1943]

The speech of Churchill[30] marks a new stage in the war. In it is revealed the anxiety and the uncertainty with which the ruling class is regarding the future. Churchill reveals, as the main preoccupation of the ruling class, the fear that events in Italy would develop beyond their control. Apparently, ever since the removal of Mussolini,[31] the British ruling class has secretly been attempting to arrive at some sort of agreement with Badoglio and the Italian monarchy. At the very time that the revolutionary and fervent anti-fascist workers of Milan, Turin and other cities were being mercilessly bombed by the air-force of British imperialism, cynically the British capitalists were negotiating a deal with the very forces that helped Mussolini into power.

Churchill revealed that he had sent frantic telegrams to the British generals to speed up the invasion[32] lest Italy lapse into "anarchy" (i.e. that the workers and peasants move towards the overthrow of capitalism and the seizure of power) before the imperialists could occupy the Italian peninsula. Thus Churchill demonstrated the class bias and the class aims of the British government.

As if to emphasise the real aims of the war, there is the emphatic assertion that Italy has irretrievably lost her empire. Does this mean that the inhabitants of the Italian colonies and of Abyssinia will be given independence, freedom and self-determination? The ruling class has shown exactly what programme they intend

to carry out by their continued occupation of “liberated” Abyssinia. The territories of the former Italian empire will be incorporated into the British empire under the guise of “protectorates” or some other high-sounding title as were the colonies of Germany in the last war. Thus the statement of Mr Eden that Britain was not fighting to acquire new territory is revealed as being as false as the solemn and perjured pledge of Lloyd George in the last war[33]. “What we have we hold” remains the maxim of British imperialism, with the addition “plus anything else we can grab”.

The armistice that was arranged with Badoglio and Victor Emmanuel marks the passing over of the Italian ruling class into the camp of the Allies. Yesterday’s supporters of fascism come out as today’s supporters of “democracy”. Thus they place themselves under the protection and support of Allied bayonets. As the Allies advance, AMGOT advances with them. The masses are prohibited from political activity till more “normal” times, and the capitalists and the landlords, the Church and the monarchy will be entrenched in power. Badoglio and the king who have no support from the workers and peasants, and are as guilty of the crime of fascism as Mussolini himself, will be pushed into power. Thus the capitalists explode the legend of a fight against fascism.

Symbolically when the Italian fleet surrendered, the admirals, the overwhelming majority of whom were supporters of fascism before the fall of Mussolini, were given a guard of honour by the British. Thus the ruling class of Britain gives notification to the world that they intend to maintain in power the military caste, the Church hierarchy, the civil bureaucracy and the Italian monarchy – not to speak of the landlords and capitalists. That is a picture of the “liberation” of Europe which will be created wherever the Anglo-American imperialists establish control.

Tomorrow, if possible, in the Balkans with the accomplices of Hitler. And the day after in Germany as well. The capitalists will immediately find a common language with the Junkers, the military and civil officialdom, and the capitalists who pushed Hitler into power.[34]

That the British ruling class are preparing [for more] Badoglio or Darlans [was] stated explicitly by Churchill:

“Satellite states suborned or overawed, may perhaps, if they can help to shorten the war, be allowed to work their passage home.”[35]

The workers have a better expression for this sort of horse-deal, it is obviously a “carve-up” that Churchill contemplates. The lame excuse “shortening the war” is merely dragged in to cover the fact that they are quite willing to back up Antonescu or some other quisling against the Rumanians, [and to use] the Bulgarian, Hungarian and other satellite [regimes] of Hitler against the workers and peasants, so long as they are willing to switch sides. And why not? British imperialism has as allies the Polish and Greek dictatorships. The Balkan countries are pawns in the game of the great powers. They choose the side which they consider the strongest, and expect crumbs from the giants’ feast. When they believed Germany would win they supported the Axis; with an Allied victory in sight they are prepared at the first convenient opportunity to go over to Anglo-American imperialism, as a means of protecting themselves principally from the anger of their own masses, but also from the advancing Red Army which they regard with terror. Like all the capitalist participants in the war, it is not democracy or fascism [with] which they are concerned but their profits and privileges; with the struggle for markets, raw materials and colonies.

Churchill indicated the aim of the ruling class as the dismemberment of Germany and its complete occupation by Anglo-American forces for the same reasons they are preparing to occupy Italy; to cripple Germany as a competitor on the world market and to prevent the overthrow of the very capitalist forces which brought Hitler to power.

They have no programme to offer the German people. Despite the obvious

disillusionment of the masses of German workers with Hitler, Anglo-American imperialism can only offer them an even worse prospect than that of a new Versailles. That is why he holds out the sombre prospect before the masses that “the bloodiest portion of this war for Britain and the United States lies ahead of us”.

However, as Churchill revealed, with the unexpected strength of the Red Army, British imperialism together with that of America is attempting to arrive at some sort of compromise with Stalin. The re-shuffle of the government, which took place shortly after the Churchill speech, while marking a turn to the right in internal politics, with the appointment of Anderson as Chancellor of the Exchequer, also with the return of Beaverbrook to the government, marked a definite step in the direction of arranging an agreement with Stalin, a policy for which Beaverbrook has been campaigning.[36]

In all of these secret diplomatic scurrings the interests of the masses are not in the least considered. What is at stake is the desire of the ruling class temporarily to give Russia concessions on her boundaries and in reparations from Germany in return for Stalin’s help in crushing the European revolution. Significant in this regard is the suggestion that Russia should participate in AMGOT, which would simultaneously achieve the purpose of helping to delude the masses as to the real aims of the Allies in Europe, and later throw the odium of the suppression of the European workers’ aspirations not only on the “democracies” but [on] Russia as well.

In Churchill’s speech, despite the gilding of democratic phrases, the naked calculations and robber plans of world imperialism are clearly manifested. But these plans like the insane plans of Hitler will not be realised. The dreams of Nazi domination have been shattered by the resistance of the Russian workers and peasants. The dreams of Anglo-American imperialism will be shattered by the resistance of the broad masses of Europe and Asia – and above all by the workers and soldiers of Britain and America. They are not fighting to replace one set of quislings in Europe propped up by Nazi bayonets by another set or



even the same propped up by the military might of Britain and America. They have supported the Allies because they did not see any other alternative. In the coming period events will teach them that the only road to the abolition of fascism and war lies in the conquest of power by the working class, united in a socialist Europe and a socialist world.

# **Italian workers had control**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 20, October 1943]

Events in Italy have moved to a tragic climax for the workers' and peasants' revolution. The occupation of the greater part of the country by the troops of the Nazis, and the other parts by the Allies, has for the time being, paralysed the social revolution, which had reached a ripe stage of development within a few weeks of its commencement.

The Stalinists and Labour leaders have maintained a conspiracy of silence as to the meaning of events in the Italian peninsula. Nowhere have they explained the meaning of the heroic steps taken by the Italian working class. The formation of soviets, of workers' militias in the industrial cities of Northern Italy; and in the last few days before the surrender of Badoglio to the Allies, the establishment of workers' control in Italy.

The information that Badoglio had signed an agreement with the leaders of the trade unions and workers' committees, was published in their press without comment. What preceded this agreement was not explained to the working class. But it is quite clear from the press, despite the severe censorship, that when Mussolini fell, the big capitalists in Italy fled as rapidly as they could to Spain and to Switzerland. The workers already had direct control of many plants; they had blown open the safes and started to investigate the profiteering of the boss class and their fascist gangster protectors. It was this factor alone – that the workers had control – that forced Badoglio to “sign an agreement” and give it

the appearance of the granting of a concession.

But this was not all: the press also reported that there was to be a “government investigation into the fortunes of the fascist politicians.” Again, this was presented as if the Badoglio government was to make real investigations into the racketeering of the fascist bosses. But the facts are that the workers had already started the process. By smashing up the fascist offices; by raiding the homes of the leading fascists and taking the initiative into their own hands, the workers had commenced the investigations. It was the workers who discovered the stores of loot and food; it was the workers who exposed the graft and corruption. Badoglio gave it a legal form, only to take the movement out of the hands of the workers and cover up as best possible, the real ramifications of the graft and corruption, which undoubtedly reached up to the King and a large number of the new brand of Italian “democrats” who have decided to become quislings for the US and British imperialists.

So strong was the movement among the workers that the Badoglio government was compelled to legalise the factory committees, which, in great part supervised and regulated the workings of the factories and had control over the books and accounts of the factories to check the real profits being made by the capitalists. All these were the first stages to the taking of complete power by the working class.

It is this movement of the masses which the ruling class of Italy and of the Allies regarded with dread and hatred. It was fear of the revolution which had caused Badoglio and the King to remove Mussolini, whom they had supported and aided. Having calculated that Germany would be defeated, the Italian capitalists, financiers and landowners sold out to “democratic” imperialism in the confident knowledge that they would be protected from the revenge of the masses, by the bayonets of Anglo-American imperialism.

But the events of the last few weeks have another significance. More than six

weeks after the fall of Mussolini, the capitulation of Italy was announced. Yet the Germans were enabled to occupy the greater part of the country within a few days. Badoglio had been negotiating secretly for terms for weeks. Had the masses been organised for resistance the Nazis could never have taken over with such ease. Despite the heroic resistance of the workers in the industrial cities of the North, their lack of equipment and organisation, together with the bewilderment and demoralisation of the soldiers, led to a collapse. Milan was conquered by 1,500 German soldiers and 12 tanks; Como by 85 German soldiers, Venice by two E-boats. So it was in all the industrial cities of the North.

Thus it is clear that the Italian capitalists and militarists deliberately betrayed the newly awakened workers into the hands of Hitler. Terrified by the threat from the workers, they apparently believed that to send them to school to Hitler for the time being would cure them of their aspirations towards socialism.

But the actions of the Allies, who murderously bombarded the Northern cities and laid waste the anti-fascist and socialist strongholds of the working class in Milan, Turin, etc., would indicate that they were not at all disappointed at the developments as a temporary stop-gap. The British and American rulers are not at all averse to having their dirty work carried out by Himmler and the SS troops. Churchill's speeches make no secret of his fears of the revolution in Italy which he terms "anarchy". To set the British and American soldiers to destroy the factory committees, the soviets, and workers' rights, would not be such an easy task. It would embody the danger of the complete demoralisation of the British and American armies and the spreading of revolutionary feelings to their ranks.

The Nazis are doing the dirty work. British and American imperialism calculated on driving the Nazis out fairly rapidly and occupying these areas before the soviets can be reconstituted. And as in Sicily, so in Italy, AMGOT will be clamped down on the Italian masses. The military rule of British and American imperialism under which the Sicilian people are deprived of "political activities", and where the fascist administration has been preserved virtually intact, will be transferred to the Italian mainland.

The Italian revolution has been caught between the hammer of the Axis and the anvil of the Allies. In this situation, no words can adequately condemn the foul role played by Stalinism and the Socialist parties in the Italian revolution. By their echo of the imperialist demand for “unconditional surrender”, by sowing illusions in Allied aims, they assist in the martyrdom of the Italian workers and peasants.

The statement of Roosevelt and Churchill hailing Badoglio as the “liberator” of Italy from fascist servitude, is a conscious attempt to deceive the workers of Britain and America.

The first stage of the Italian revolution has ended in defeat. But the Italian workers will rise again in the coming months and years together with the workers of all Europe. According to Pietro Treves, right wing Socialist leader, writing in Labour Discussion Notes of August, of the six democratic and workers’ parties which made their appearance on the fall of Mussolini, the only party which stood for the socialist republic was the Italian Trotskyist Party. Under the banner of the Fourth International the workers will avenge the crimes of capitalism and establish a new world in which the horrors of fascism and war still be banished forever in a socialist Europe and a socialist World.

## **Fascist butchers now in allied camp**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 21, Mid-October 1943]

### **Churchill's quislings have no mass support**

If clear proof is needed of the farcical character of the “war for democracy,” it is provided by the switch of the Italian capitalist class, the Italian fascists and monarchy into the Churchill-Roosevelt camp.

In gathering into their bosom the gangster generals, the Allies have given clear proof of the “Europe of tomorrow” as they visualise it. A Europe ruled by the reactionary fascists, monarchists and near-fascists; a Europe ruled by Giraud, de Gaulle, Badoglio, Roatta, Ambrosio, Salazar, Franco and Michailovich – all having one thing in common: hatred of the working class.

Badoglio formally declared war on Germany. By this action the major section of the Italian ruling class has thrown in its lot with the Anglo-American imperialists. And in this action is revealed the complete hypocrisy and insincerity of the claim that the war is a war of democracy against fascism.

*Badoglio and the Italian monarchy are as guilty of the crimes of fascism as*

*Mussolini himself. It was Badoglio and the King, as representatives of the Italian capitalists and landowners, who paved the way for the coming to power of Mussolini, who supported and aided fascism to the very end.*

It was not Badoglio's and Victor Emmanuel's new-found love of democracy which has dictated the change of sides in the middle of the war after all the bloodshed of Italian workers and peasants, but the interests of the Italian ruling class.

The bewildering changes that have taken place during the course of the present war have indicated clearly the nature of the conflict, so far as its imperialist participants are concerned. Not democracy or fascism is the issue, but the struggle for markets, raw materials, colonies, and spheres of influence.

The real nature of these sterling democrats is revealed by the members Badoglio has chosen for his government. Before they realised the change in line of the democratic Allies, most of the British press wrote disapproving articles on the composition of the government. Badoglio, Mussolini's former Chief of Staff, the man who conquered Abyssinia with bombs and poison gas, announcing his conversion to democracy and his opposition to fascism enlightens us as to the personnel of his new government:

“It will naturally and definitely exclude all fascists and it will be absolutely democratic. I shall keep the service ministers with me now. General Ambrosio, Chief of Combined Staff; General Roatta, Chief of Army Staff; Admiral de Courten, head of the Navy; and General Sandalli, commanding the Air Force.”

Even the yellow press balked at this hypocrisy. General Roatta was responsible for the reorganisation of the Italian fascist troops in Spain after their defeat at Guadalajara. Later he succeeded Graziani as Chief of the Army Staff. In January

1942 he became commander of the Italian troops of occupation in Yugoslavia, in which role he massacred, burned and pillaged the land and its people. In June 1943 he was reappointed Chief of the Army Staff, which post he has retained in Badoglio's government. General Ambrosio, who was Roatta's predecessor in Yugoslavia, has an equally criminal record of terror and suppression. These men are on the list of fascist war criminals for perpetrating atrocities in occupied countries including Greece and Yugoslavia, yet they turn up newly groomed, as members of the "democratic" government supported by the Allies. Marshall Badoglio's own record, plus his retention of such infamous fascists in the government, is sufficient indictment.

Events in North Africa, and now in Italy are the foretaste of what is being planned for the future of Europe. The rulers of Britain and America are preparing to prop up and support the very forces which placed fascism in power. In doing so the very last consideration they have in mind is the restoration of "democracy".

The real reason for the change of front of Badoglio and the Italian monarchy is the attempt to regain, if possible, some parts of the lost Italian empire and to rely on the bayonets of Anglo-American imperialism to protect them from the wrath of the Italian masses. The hypocrisy of the Anglo-American imperialists is clear for all to see. Badoglio and the King have no support whatsoever among the Italian masses. Far from seeking out the real representatives of the masses, the allied imperialists have gone out of their way to emphasise their support of the "royal" Italian government. This underlines their intention to preserve even the reactionary monarchy which ushered in fascism.

Apart from the removal of Mussolini and a few scapegoats among the high-up fascists, everything is to remain the same in Italy according to their calculations.

When Badoglio was being questioned by newspaper correspondents as to whether his intentions included the restoration of democracy, according to the



report of the News Chronicle, General Mason Macfarlane intervened on his behalf, with the remark: “Under the circumstances the question might be difficult to answer!” Here we see how much the Allied generals at any rate, care about “democracy”!

As if expressly designed to make a mockery of the Allied claims, almost simultaneously with the announcement of the Italian declaration of war against Germany, comes the agreement with Portugal on the Azores. While Hitler was winning in the early stages of the war, the Portuguese government inclined towards Germany. Salazar is a dictator who has suppressed the Portuguese trade unions and working class organisations, who supports fascism and actively assisted Franco, Mussolini and Hitler to defeat the Spanish workers in the Civil War. Now he is supporting the “democracies”. And Franco too is preparing to move over to the side of the British and American imperialists in order to gain concessions. None of them are concerned with anything but loot.

Meanwhile the Italian workers who so heroically demonstrated their willingness to strive for a better world and for socialism after the fall of Mussolini, are held under the boot of the Nazis and Allied imperialism, while Italy has become a battlefield.

But the imperialists will not be able to work such an easy passage for Badoglio or for themselves either. The Italian revolution will rise again together with the workers of all Europe. Badoglio has unwittingly provided proof of this fact, in his interview with the war correspondents when he said:

“A curious incident shows the extent of the feeling of relief, not only among Italians, but among the German soldiers. About the same time as the fall of Mussolini was announced, a rumour spread round Rome that Hitler had been assassinated.

“We saw German soldiers go into ecstasies of joy. They threw photographs of Hitler into the streets from their barracks windows, and cheered.”

It is this movement of the Italian masses which destroyed fascism. The German soldiers in Rome have provided a glimpse of the movement of the German workers tomorrow. Together with the workers of Britain and America, they will build a new world in which fascism and war will be abolished forever by abolishing their cause: capitalism.

# **The Moscow conference plans post-war reaction**

## **Stalin agrees with Anglo-US imperialists to hold Europe in chains**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 22, November 1943]

The Three Powers conference[37] has been held on the eve of the 26th anniversary of the Russian revolution, but between the tradition and diplomacy of Lenin and that of Stalin, flow rivers of blood. This Moscow conference would augur a bleak outlook for world socialism, if the future depended upon its decisions.

Apart from the verbiage of phrases, which recall the phrases of Wilson[38] in the last war, the reality behind the agreement is the domination of Europe by Anglo-American imperialism, assisted by the Soviet bureaucracy.

Well in advance, the Stalinist bureaucracy places itself on the other side of the barricades. This agreement marks a systematic conspiracy against the socialist revolution in Europe, in return for which Stalin has obtained some paltry concessions.

Because of the present relationship of forces, Anglo-American imperialism has

been compelled to take this course. Like Hitler, they had completely miscalculated the strength of the Soviet Union. Far from Hitler obtaining a stranglehold on the Soviet Union, the Red Army is advancing to a series of Napoleonic victories which have sealed the doom of Nazi Germany; the masses of all Europe look with confidence and hope towards the Red Army, which has the sympathy and support of the overwhelming majority.

For Anglo-American imperialism to attempt a struggle against the Soviet Union at the present time would inevitably provoke violent repercussions among the masses in Britain and even America. Apart from this, the imperialists recognise the virtual impossibility of holding down Europe without the assistance of Stalinism. The prestige of the Russian revolution, the admiration by the world working class of the Red Army, are to be harnessed and used for the stifling of the inevitable urge of the European masses towards socialism.

In return for Stalin's help in ensuring the continuation of capitalism in Europe, the Allies are prepared temporarily to make concessions to him. They are promising military support in the coming period. Probably secret agreements have been made between the Allies and the Soviet Union in relation to the Baltic states and the strategic frontiers which the Soviet Union is demanding, and also agreements on the share of reparations, etc.

From the pages of the Russian press and publications it is clear that Stalin looks forward to a capitalist Europe in which a super-Versailles will be imposed upon Germany. The Soviet government is apparently demanding that stringent reparations must be imposed on Germany – a burden which the German militarists and capitalists will shift to the shoulders of the German workers and peasants.

Reparations, according to the economist Varga writing in the Russian publication *War and the Working Class*, which will compel Germany to make good the destruction in the Soviet Union, replace machinery, etc., which the Nazis have

destroyed in Russia. This is a “peace” of revenge, not against the real organisers of Nazism – the capitalists, generals and landowners – with whom Stalin is preparing to collaborate, but against the German workers and peasants.

The Stalin regime is systematically out-Vansittarting Vansittart.[39] The Russian press is carrying on a campaign of hate and racist venom against the Germans – as Germans – that must excite the envy of the arch-racist Goebbels. Seldom in world history has such a campaign of chauvinism been equalled. Its only comparison is the world campaign against Bolshevism launched by the world press in the first years of the Soviet republic under Lenin and Trotsky.

Millions of copies of books are being printed in the Soviet Union on the lines of Vansittart’s Black Record, containing extracts from Russian authors from the past century, denouncing the Huns. This is a preparation for the joint occupation of Germany and destruction of any attempted social revolution on the part of the German masses.

But such an agreement by its very nature can only be of a temporary character. The results of the Red Army offensives have aroused fear and consternation among the capitalist class of the entire world. In 1941, with the loss of the Donetz Basin and the Ukraine, the imperialists of Britain and America regarded the defeat and disintegration of the Soviet Union as a foregone conclusion. But with the advantages of collective ownership of the means of production and the morale and self sacrifice among the workers and soldiers, the Soviet Union recovered from the staggering blows and built up new industries in the Urals and Siberia. It is these factories which have provided the material for the Red Army advances.

To the imperialists this looms as an ominous fact. The industrially backward Soviet Union has defeated industrially advanced Germany with the resources of all Europe at her disposal. And this, while cut off from the richest agricultural and industrial resources of the country! What would happen in any future

conflict between the “Allies” and the Soviet Union if the Ukraine and European Russia had to be restored quickly with the aid of German machinery and technicians? In the effort to destroy the Nazi Frankenstein, the Allies would find themselves in the position of having developed an even more dangerous monster to them. That is why any temporary alignment between the powers could not be long lasting.

The imperialists are preparing a savage and ruthless despoliation of the peoples of Europe; as ruthless towards the German masses as the SS “peace” on the peoples of Europe by Hitler. In return for betraying the socialist revolution in Europe the imperialists are willing to allow the Stalinist bureaucracy a voice in the domination of Europe. It is agreed that the Three Powers act together on a European Commission which will decide the fate of Europe. In Italy the Badoglio government is to open its ranks to include all the “anti-fascist forces” – i.e. Stalin will be represented through the Italian “Communist” Party.

This arrangement will quite likely be extended to other countries in Europe, where the Stalinists will play their part, as one of the joint communiqués phrases it, in the restoration of “law and order” to Europe (i.e. capitalist “law” and capitalist “order”, where the rights of private property will remain the paramount consideration for the Allies). Symbolic of the degeneration of the Stalinist regime is the approval which they give to this phrase, the classic phrase behind which reaction has always sheltered when wading in the blood of the working class while suppressing the socialist revolution. It was with the cry of “law and order” that Galliffet butchered the Communards, that Liebknecht and Luxemburg were murdered in the German revolution, that Mussolini and Hitler massacred the Italian and German workers. Always the slogan has had a sinister connotation. It is no less sinister at the present time.

The real purpose of the Three Powers talks has been to come to some arrangements for the post-war world. Vague references to disarmament in the post-war period, and the regulation of armaments after the disarming of the defeated Axis powers, are utopian and futile when account is taken of the

antagonism of interests between the Allies. The defeat of Hitler would open up a period of revolutionary disturbances in Europe which would inevitably affect all the Allied countries as well. If these were defeated, the panacea of peace and the illusion of a peaceful co-existence of the Soviet Union with capitalism would soon be dispelled.

The antagonism of interests between the powers on a background of world impoverishment and decay, would reach a new intensity. In the last war Lenin proclaimed that the idea of peace under capitalism was a harmful fairy tale. That is truer today than it has ever been. Truer still is the fact that it is impossible to separate the fate of the Soviet Union from the fate of the working class in Europe and the world.

Despite the victories of the Red Army, the Soviet Union has been terribly weakened by the war of attrition and destruction waged against Hitler, and meanwhile the bureaucracy has steadily moved away from socialism. The danger of capitalist restoration has loomed closer as the power has passed into the hands of the military bureaucracy within the Soviet Union.

Fortunately, the imperialists are miscalculating again, together with Stalin, if not against him. Their dreams of holding down all Europe and the world, of preparing for war against the Soviet Union, are as unreal and fantastic as the plans of Hitler for world domination. The socialist revolution will have the last word.

The insurgent masses of Europe, the Russian workers and soldiers, and the workers and soldiers of Britain and America, the colonial peoples – all will write their own programme of peace, a programme whose banner was raised by the Russian revolution 26 years ago: Bread, Land and Peace! This is a programme which can only be realised by the overthrow of capitalism and the abolition of national frontiers – a programme of international cooperation in a socialist united states of Europe and a socialist world.

*No matter what the vicissitudes of the revolution, the programme of October will be realised. The International shall be the human race! The Fourth International will carry through the programme of Lenin and Trotsky.*



# **Lebanon clash bares de Gaulle-Churchill aims**

## **British stake claim to dominate post-war Arab federation**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 23, Mid-November 1943]

Fighting between French Senegalese and the Arab masses in the Lebanon has been taking place. Troops were out and unarmed Arab masses have been killed. A general strike was declared in Beirut, Tripoli and other cities of the Lebanon.

The incident which precipitated this was the arrest of the Lebanese Prime Minister and his ministers and deputies of the Lebanese Parliament. Taking advantage of a promise of independence made by the "Free French"[40] the Lebanese Parliament introduced a bill which would render the Lebanon practically independent of France. The French "democratic" authorities replied by forcefully dissolving the Parliament, despite the fact that 52 out of 54 deputies support the government.

This movement reflects the longing of the starved and oppressed Arab masses to be rid of their imperialist exploiters. Ever since the last war, when the Arabs were promised independence and freedom by both Britain and France in return for aid against their Turkish overlords, there has been a movement towards independence among all the Arab countries.

Despite the solemn promises, British and French imperialism cynically maintained themselves on the backs of the Arab people throughout the last decades, by means of armies of occupation forcibly holding the people of Palestine, Syria, Egypt and Iraq in subjection. Many times, the Arab masses in all these countries have risen in revolt to obtain their liberation, and these movements have been brutally suppressed by the imperialists. In 1938 the Arabs in Palestine fought for their independence from British imperialism[41].

At a time when French imperialism was in a helpless state and the adventurer de Gaulle completely dependent upon Britain, he made a declaration of independence for Syria and the Lebanon, partly under the pressure of the Arab masses in those countries and partly under the pressure of British imperialism, whose interests this suited.

But this uprising of the Lebanese has been the means of showing the whole hypocrisy of the imperialists and their real aims in the war.

General de Gaulle, who has been pictured by the Stalinists and Labour leaders as a fighter for democracy and freedom for France, reveals himself as a representative of the French capitalists and of French imperialism. This “democrat” is prepared to wade in the blood of the Arab peoples and brutally repress any attempt to free themselves from French domination. Tomorrow, faced with demands by the French workers, he would be prepared to act in exactly the same way against them. Meanwhile the French government in Algiers has proclaimed its intention to ensure independence for Lebanon and Syria... after the war! So the repressions are being maintained because the Lebanese are too impatient!

Actually de Gaulle and the French imperialists hope to delay any action until France would be strong enough to crush completely any movement towards

asserting any rights on the part of the Lebanese or any other colonial people for that matter. Suitable pretexts can always be found, and declarations and promises always repudiated by perjured imperialism under the excuse of “changed conditions” and “necessity”. In reality, the French imperialists have not had the slightest intention of relinquishing their hold, if they could avoid it.

But what has precipitated the conflict has been the obvious encouragement given to the Lebanese nationalists by British imperialism. It is clear that the capitalist leaders of the Lebanese nationalists would not have taken the bold steps they did, especially when it is considered that the population of the Lebanon is only a million, if they had not been promised support in advance. The French Committee in Cairo openly stated:

“Under the influence of elements who are not so much interested in the independence of Lebanon as they are anxious to push France from these regions, the (Lebanese) government put a *fait accompli* before the French National Committee...” (Daily Express, November 13 1943)

This support was obviously promised by British imperialism. The immediate protests lodged by the British government with de Gaulle, indicate that this is so, British imperialism comes forth as an altruist interested in the rights of small nations. In Parliament, the Astors, and other reactionary former supporters of Hitler, came forward in protest against the actions of general de Gaulle. The British authorities in Lebanon in the army of occupation have already proclaimed that the French have lost control of the situation, thus preparing the excuse for any action they may take. If the British imperialists were interested in the independence of the Arabs, they have had plenty of possibility of showing this by granting independence to Palestine and other countries. But in India, while paying lip service to the idea of independence... after the war, the British capitalists have, as brutally as de Gaulle, suppressed the Indian masses for demanding freedom. They have as much belief in de Gaulle’s promise “after the war” as they have in their own – that is precisely nil.

*The aims of British imperialism in this area are transparently clear. Through their Egyptian quisling King Farouk, they have protested to the French as well as directly themselves. They wish to pose as friends of the Arabs. British imperialism hopes to set up a Pan-Arab federation under British domination. Lebanon occupies a key strategic position in the Mediterranean. It is in the centre of the rich oil-bearing regions of the Middle East. It is rather curious that the regent of Iraq (a British puppet who together with the Egyptian government, are pushing the plan for Arab federation – under British dominance) should be in London at the present time. Reynolds News points out that,*

“the countries considered desirable adherents to the plan, contain most of the oil fields and oil routes of the Middle East outside Iran. They are Egypt, Palestine, Transjordan, Syria, the Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.”

It is control of this strategic group of countries that the British capitalist gangsters are after. And it is for the French capitalists to have a finger in this lucrative pie, that de Gaulle is desperately defending.

The whole character of the war is shown in this dramatic episode. It is not democracy that Anglo-American and French imperialism are fighting for, but loot, colonies, markets, raw materials and spheres of influence. Yesterday British imperialism applauded de Gaulle as a great French statesman. Today they are attacking him in the British capitalist press. The reason is clear. De Gaulle has refused to accept the position of a puppet of Anglo-American imperialism. He still does not realise the reality of the weak position of the French capitalists and has fantastic illusions of restoring French imperialism to as powerful a position as it possessed before the war. But French imperialism has been defeated by Germany. Her dear “ally” Britain, though weeping many tears over this fact, is only too eager to take advantage of it. It is the inexorable law of capitalist power politics. But now the war in Europe is drawing to a close and the defeat of Germany is inevitable. The ruling class is preoccupied by the struggle for positions in the post-war world. From continuing the political and economic war by military means, they wish to transform the military war into the war for their

interests by political means.

In peace and war, it is the interests of the capitalists of all the imperialist countries which dictates their policy. The workers of Britain and of the world have been given a dress rehearsal of the world the imperialists are preparing for after the “peace”. Today British imperialists double-cross their French “allies”. Tomorrow, American imperialism will mete out the same treatment to their dear cousin. Both Anglo-American imperialists will treat the Soviet Union in the same way, if they get the chance. Dog eat dog is the law of imperialism. Not “right”, “honour”, “freedom” or “friendship” or the “rights of small nations”, etc., dictates the policies of the imperialist states but the naked calculations of profit.

The friction between the French imperialists and their British allies and rivals was revealed already by the Moscow conference, when the Allies were meeting to decide the fate of Europe and the French National Committee were not included in the discussions or given a seat on the “European Advisory Commission”, which is supposed to decide all questions of policy for Europe. It is thus that the fate of all the nations of Europe, little and big, is to be decided. The French National Committee in Algiers protested vigorously against their exclusion.

The antics of the Labour “lefts” on this question are quite grotesque and out of place. While the Labour leaders are naturally openly and unashamedly supporting British imperialism, the Labour lefts have placed themselves in the ridiculous position of defending the actions of the French National Committee. And they are forced into this position in order to maintain the fiction of an anti-fascist war. The Stalinists have run true to form in maintaining an even viler and more treacherous stand. The Daily Worker has played down the incidents in the Lebanon and attempted to cover up the real cause of the uprising and of the conflict between the French and British imperialists. To tell the truth, that this is an indication of Allied imperialism’s war aims, would serve to discredit their shameful policy of lies and deception. Hence their support of general de Gaulle

and their frantic hope that this conflict between Britain and France will be settled quickly – inevitably, of course, at the expense of the Lebanese masses. They are afraid that if the conflict develops, it would open the eyes of their own followers as to the perfidy of their policy.

The irony of the situation rests in the fact that French Stalinism, in obedience to the orders of the Kremlin, is just at this moment exerting pressure on de Gaulle, in an effort to force him to accept the role of satellite to the Anglo-American-Soviet bloc. In dealing with the negotiations of the French communists, with the National Committee in Algiers, for representation in the committee, the News Chronicle correspondent in Algiers reports on November 13th:

“Following their refusal of a seat on the National Committee, the French communists have taken the committee sharply to task for demanding a place for France on the European Control Commission.”

The spokesman for the communists in this matter is Florimond Bonte, one of the six communist delegates in the Consultative Assembly and editor of the party paper *Liberté*. In the latest issue of this paper, Bonte writes:

“We do not know why the National Committee has judged fit, without saying at whom it was aiming, to temper its satisfaction at the Moscow decisions with observations on the future settlement of the fate of Germany.

“The duty of the National Committee, if it wishes to give France the means of playing a prominent part in the concert of free nations, is to augment every day the war effort of the French empire, to reinforce the morale and the material of the national army, and to increase the armament of patriots inside France...”

Thus the Stalinists, in Britain, France and other countries play the most shameless role.

The Turkish press has now taken up the pressure on the French National Committee and has openly warned the French that they will be thrust out of Syria.

“If France thinks she is going to remain in Syria after the war she is mistaken,” writes M. Necmettin Sadak, editor of Aksham. Turkey here is obviously also playing the game of British imperialism, in return for promised favours, which may have something to do with the discussions Eden had in Egypt with the Turkish foreign minister.

Meanwhile, the incident has been a welcome diversion for Goebbels, who is faced with growing mass revolt against the Nazis in Germany. He is using the incident to demonstrate what the real aims of Anglo-American imperialists are and what the German people could expect from them if they were victorious. Thus the imperialists assist one another with their crimes.

*British workers must demand that unconditional freedom should be granted to all the Arab peoples, without the right of Britain or France to garrison the “independent” countries of Egypt, Syria, etc. They must aid the Arab masses to fight for an Arab federation completely independent of all the great imperialist powers. For this is a step in the direction of a socialist world.*

# **Allied talks plot world carve-up**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 24, Mid-December 1943]

The last few weeks have been marked by intense diplomatic activities on the part of the “United” Nations. These conferences mark the new turn in the war in which Germany faces inevitable collapse and Japan is pushed onto the defensive.

The main motivation of these conferences has been an attempt to arrive at some agreement between the Allies on the political map in Europe once German imperialism has been defeated.

The Teheran [Tehran] agreement has been hailed as a guarantee of a better world and of permanent peace by the whole of the capitalist press. Earlier, that political buffoon Harry Pollitt[42], getting down on all fours in front of his imperialist masters, the better to lick their boots, had proclaimed ecstatically that the Moscow agreement was an even greater event than the Russian revolution! The superlatives of the CP in describing the results of the meeting between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill were in similar vein.

However the real meaning of the agreement, and we may be sure that it contained secret provisions which have not been published, is sufficiently clear.



The unexpected strength of the Soviet Union has compelled the imperialists temporarily to arrive at an agreement with her. German imperialism has hurled its might against the Soviet Union in vain; despite terrible wounds the Soviet Union remains a mighty military power. In addition to which the imperialists have to reckon with the fact that the war has already lasted longer than the last imperialist war, and the war weariness and bitterness of the masses throughout the world brings in its train revolutionary explosions. Especially is this so in relation to the continent of Europe.

They must end the war quickly if events are not to place the situation completely beyond their control.

But the overwhelming majority of the peoples of occupied Europe look towards the Soviet Union for a way out. And in Britain, and America too, the working class looks towards the Soviet Union with sympathy. Thus the imperialists are compelled to attempt a compromise with the Kremlin bureaucracy. They can do so because Stalin fears the socialist revolution in Europe as much as they do themselves. Against the socialist revolution in Europe they have a common basis. The Stalinist bureaucracy is the only force, they recognise, which can assist them in smashing the movement of the masses in Europe.

This agreement was to decide on the treatment of Germany and her satellites after they have been defeated. For Europe it offers no way out. Draconic retribution meted out to the German nation, on the same lines as the Nazis inflicted on occupied Europe, can only sow the seeds of future war, just as the basis for the present war was sown at the Versailles peace table. In return for the sabotage of the revolution in Europe, the Stalinist bureaucracy is obviously demanding that enormous reparations must be paid by Germany.

But while sowing illusions in the minds of the world working class in the repulsive ceremony at Teheran, of the aims and objectives of his "Allies", Stalin has been afraid of their intentions towards the Soviet Union. He has objected to

the manoeuvres behind the scenes in which they have prepared to form a new “cordon sanitaire” in Eastern and Western Europe directed against the Soviet Union. Because of the relationship of forces, in words, and only temporarily, they have been forced to abandon this project. The imperialists have apparently agreed to abandon the plan for federations in Eastern and Central Europe which are to be directed against the Soviet Union, and have conceded to Russia the frontiers the bureaucracy has demanded. A significant statement appears in the Times of December 13th in dealing with the Czech-Russian treaty saying that Czechoslovakian and Russian relations will be influenced by their common frontier.

*Such a statement appearing in an article in the Times was an acknowledgement by the mouthpiece of British imperialism of the frontiers established by Russia in 1940.*

Meanwhile, the Anglo-American imperialists are using their enormous financial and material preponderance of armaments for the purpose of undermining the position of Germany before dealing their decisive death thrust by invading Europe. Churchill and Roosevelt have had discussions with the president of Turkey. Pressure and blandishments must have been used to persuade Turkey to enter the war. And it is indeed unlikely that Turkey, no more than Holland, Norway or any of the other small countries, could stay out of the war if the Balkans became a sphere of operations. Meanwhile rumours have appeared that Roosevelt (and probably Churchill too) is having discussions with the “democrats” Salazar and Franco to define their attitude when Western Europe is invaded. The spectacle of the fascist butcher Franco on the same side as the “democracies” is not to be ruled out. Promises of loans, economic aid, etc., might induce Franco to grant air bases or even a right of passage across Spain. As always the small powers have no choice but that of their masters; their decisions rest not on questions of democracy or fascism, but the relative strength of the giants struggling for world domination and which group of powers they believe will be on the winning side. Threats directed to Finland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary are intended to persuade these satellites of Hitler to change sides, as Badoglio has done in Italy, to move over to the stronger side. Thus the gruesome game of power politics goes on.

The Anglo-American imperialists wish to confront German imperialism with such an array of overwhelming force as to persuade the German generals and industrialists, already preoccupied with the threat of revolution on the part of the working class, to remove Hitler as the Italians removed Mussolini and submit to the victors[43]. If the deal with these elements should not succeed, then all the preparations will have been made to invade Europe from all sides.

*The almost-certain defeat of Nazi Germany will not solve any of the problems for Europe or the world, any more than the destruction of the Kaiser's Germany inaugurated an epoch of peace and democratic advance. The imperialists themselves are compelled to recognise the nature of the problem which capitalism is incapable of solving. The problem of the division of Europe into many states which have antagonistic interests and yet are mutually interdependent one upon the other. The Times in an editorial comments:*

“But Europe is a unit in the sense that no plan of military security or of economic order can work which does not treat Europe as a whole.

“...Efficiency demands a comprehensive plan and comprehensive action not limited by national frontiers; and the same will be equally true of long range economic construction.”

The Times regards the problem of Europe from the angle of joint hegemony over a capitalist Europe by Britain and Russia:

“In Europe that organised preponderance of power must be exercised, primarily though not exclusively, and in the name of the United Nations, by Great Britain and Russia...

“If on the other hand Great Britain and Russia were to fall out, or if they were to disinterest themselves in the affairs of the Continent, then the framework of European order and security would break down and the means of enforcing the continued dismemberment of Germany, even if it had been imposed at the outset, would no longer exist. In the only conditions in which European security can be a reality, the dismemberment of the Reich is irrelevant and unnecessary; in any other conditions it is impracticable and could not be maintained...

“The true solution must then be sought on other lines. In the Europe of the future, the key points, of military and economic power, including – and especially – the whole war potential of the German Reich, will be under the firm control of organs representative of Europe as a whole or, in some cases perhaps, of a still wider constituency.”

Such a solution, which, apart from the probable secret intentions to dismember East Prussia and possibly Silesia as a compensation to Poland, with bits and pieces torn from Germany given to the other Allies of Britain on the European continent, would leave Germany intact except for the detachment of Austria from the Reich. Probably the Soviet Union is demanding that Germany should be left as a single state as she was after the last war, as an insurance against her present allies.

Whatever the alignment of forces, the “peace” will be even more transitory than it was after the last war. Stalin’s policy, if successful, would not preserve the status quo for long. A capitalist Europe, if stabilised, would speedily develop to the victory of the most barbarous reaction, and this in its turn would prepare the way for a new war of intervention against the Soviet Union, despite the services of the bureaucracy in the interests of capitalism. Meanwhile the contradictions between America and Britain would have developed a new intensity. The continuance of capitalism would speedily and with inexorable necessity result in a new and even more monstrous world bloodbath. Such is the price for mankind of capitalist anarchy and capitalist chaos as expressed through the outworn

private ownership of the means of production and the outworn national states.

*But fortunately, the calculations of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, no more than those of Hitler and Mussolini will be able to dictate the course of events. Already the civil war, under the very heel of the invader, taking place in Poland, Greece and Yugoslavia are a mirror of developments that will burst forth throughout the European continent. Not the present rulers of destiny but the masses of all Europe and the world will have the last word to say. They will fight for a united socialist states of Europe and a socialist world.*

# Stalin scraps “Internationale”

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 25, January 1944]

The announcement of the decision to abolish the Internationale as the anthem of the Soviet Union marks a step of profound and symbolic importance. The step has been hailed with discreet and enthusiastic approval by the capitalist press of Britain, America and other countries. The formerly openly pro-fascist and anti-Soviet press has revealed its jubilation, the Daily Mail in its leader column pointing out its meaning as the formal end of the “Trotskyist” idea of world revolution.

The scrapping of the Internationale and its substitution by a reactionary national anthem is of course a logical development following the open abandonment by Stalin and the bureaucracy in Russia of the hollow pretence of standing for world socialism by the abolition of the Comintern[44]. It marks the consolidation, however uneasy, of the power of the nationalist military cliques in Russia, who are attempting to find a common language and a common basis with the imperialists of the West. It is a further guarantee and reassurance to the capitalist class in Britain and America that so far as the rest of Europe and the world are concerned, Russia now has purely “national” aims and stands on the same side of “law and order”, i.e. capitalist property, as they do. This trend has been well understood by the representatives of the capitalist class not only in the governments but the well-informed businessmen, journalists etc. In the New York Times of October 31st, C. L. Sulzberger writes:

“Many Russians [i.e. Russian Stalinist bureaucrats in the Embassy, etc. - EG] with whom the writer has talked, frankly discussed the dangers of a communised Germany. They take the view that this would eventually turn in the direction of Trotskyism and might conceivably begin once again, therefore, to foment dangers for the Soviet Union – a possibility which will at all costs have to be avoided.”

But the betrayal of the policy for which Marx and Lenin fought all their lives is reflected not only in the abandonment of the struggle for international socialism but in the speeding up of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union. The Observer of December 26 1943 soberly assessing the significance of the new move remarks:

“The abolition of the Internationale as the national anthem of the Soviet Union and its replacement by a national and patriotic song comes at the end of a year which has seen more fundamental changes in Russia than any since the great revolution. The restoration of an officer corps; the abolition of the political commissars in the army; the adoption by Stalin of the title of Marshall; the dissolution of the Comintern; the restoration of the Russian Church – all this together – now symbolised in the change of the national anthem, amounts to little less than a new revolution from above, peaceful and orderly, but profound.”

Aside from the reference to a “peaceful” and “orderly” change, which is merely introduced to indicate approval of the change, the comment is fairly shrewd and accurate. All these steps are in a counter-revolutionary direction and favourable to the interests of world imperialism, which is anxiously watching the development of events in the Soviet Union. Stalinism, which represented the interests of the officialdom in Russia, having usurped power from the masses, is now moving at an accelerated pace away from the ideals of the October revolution. Power has passed from the civil to the military bureaucracy.

The [British] “Communist” Party faced with this new contemptuous slap in the

face to the ideals of socialism, has, as was inevitable, attempted to justify this new betrayal. On the first day following the news, the Daily Worker printed the announcement without comment. They were waiting for the “party line”. Then they issued a statement which claimed that nothing had been changed. Russia had made its revolution and achieved “socialism” and therefore the Internationale no longer applied, they have argued. Apart from the fact that the idea in making the Internationale the anthem of the Soviet Union was conceived as linking the workers of Russia, and the Soviet Union itself, to the world working class, as part of the struggle for liberation of the world working class like all the other conceptions of Bolshevism under Lenin’s leadership. The oath of the Red Army (long since changed) pledged the Red Army to serve faithfully the interests of the world working class; and the Red Army was described by Lenin as one of the arms of the Communist International. In any case the flimsy character of the lie is exposed when it is remembered that the Stalinists more than a decade ago falsely announced the lie that socialism had been established. If the Internationale is not necessary now, why was it necessary then?

This declaration constitutes a new stab in the back for the Red Army and the world working class. It will prepare the way for new blows on the part of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Nevertheless, it should be welcomed by the advanced workers as helping to clear the minds of the world working class of any illusion that Stalinism still remains a revolutionary force striving for socialism. It is clear that the banner of socialism, the banner of the Internationale, is now carried by the Fourth International alone. Officially dropped by the traitor Stalinist bureaucrats, it now belongs to us who proudly adopt the song of the Paris Commune and of the October revolution, the song of Marx and Engels, the song of Lenin and Trotsky, as our anthem.



# Stalin recognises Badoglio

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 20, April 1944]

The recognition of the government of Victor Emmanuel and marshal Badoglio by Stalin will cause tremendous repercussions among the advanced workers in Italy and throughout the world.

The masses in Italy have shown their hatred of these Allied puppets in the area under the domination of Anglo-American imperialism by stormy demonstrations of protest.

The left parties in Italy, including the so-called "Communist" Party, under this irresistible mass pressure have been continually demanding the resignation of Badoglio, the abdication of the king, and the setting up of a government which has the "support of the people." And this demand has not risen out of nothing. Badoglio and the king are as much guilty of the crimes of fascism against the Italian people as Mussolini himself. The apparatus of Badoglio's regime is largely composed of former fascists, who have come over to the Allies, as have Badoglio and the monarchy, because Allied imperialism appeared to be on the winning side.

The hatred of Badoglio and his regime is so strong that without Anglo-American bayonets, it could not be maintained. The decision of the Allied imperialists to

maintain Badoglio in power till after the fall of Rome at least, resulted in a mass movement of protest in Italy, and not least, from the Italian Communist Party. The Daily Worker of Monday, March 13 1944 reported:

“Five thousand demonstrators, crowded into the central part of the Galleria Umberto, lustily cheered denunciations of king Victor Emmanuel and marshal Badoglio today.”

The British CP had piously protested against Churchill’s statement on this question and the Daily Worker reported under the heading: Cheers for Russia:

“Although the original purpose of the meeting was to replace the forbidden ten-minute strike of workers called for March 4th, as a protest against Mr Churchill’s statement in the House of Commons that the present administration in Italy was the best available until Rome is reached, not one orator mentioned the prime minister’s name.

“It was noticeable that cheers for Britain and America, which have hitherto been a feature of all democratic demonstrations, did not figure in today’s proceedings, but every reference to Russia brought tumultuous applause.

“Paolo Tedeschi, the official communist speaker, announced that the anti-fascist parties will, in the coming weeks, organise a referendum.

“He asked the crowd whether it was true that king Victor exercises authority over Italian soldiers. The crowd loudly replied: ‘No’.”

Because of the indignation of even mild left-wing circles in the Labour movement in Britain, the CP was compelled to feign opposition to Churchill's cynical deal with these fascist scum. In its editorial of March 10th, the Daily Worker declared with mock indignation:

“This movement of a nation [strikes in Italy – EG] oversteps and dwarfs alike the ludicrous ‘Mussolini neo-fascists’ that the Germans are trying to build up, and the court camarilla around Badoglio and king Victor Emmanuel.

“Let it be a lesson to those among our own leaders who seek to resurrect the strutting figures of the past.

“For the leaders of this tide of revolt are not those who tried to escape the consequences of their crimes by climbing on the victors' bandwagon [i.e. Badoglio, Emmanuel & Co. – EG], but the tried and true anti-fascist parties from Catholic to Communist, who fought and opposed the Italian fascists as the enemies of mankind.”

The rest of the article is in the same strain. Attempting to “reason” with the imperialists to abandon their former fascist puppets and support the mass movement of the Italian people to rid themselves of these elements.

On the Monday the Stalinist rag was enthusiastically hailing the protest of the Italian masses, on the Tuesday the news came through that far from “our rulers” having learned from the Italian events, the Soviet bureaucracy had apparently gone much further than even the Allied imperialists had dared to go, and had recognised the Badoglio regime outright.

Thus the Stalinist bureaucracy has added one more to the list of crimes against the working class and has taken another decisive step in violation of the traditions of Leninism. This is a deliberate stab in the back against the heroic working class of Italy and against the socialist revolution. And it indicates that the Stalinist bureaucracy has understood the “lesson” of the events in North Italy only too well.

Even under the iron heel of the Nazis the Italian workers in the industrial North are showing their strength and their movement towards socialism. Already today in Italy in the agricultural South the policy of the Stalinists of supporting the Allies has resulted in a split in the Communist Party. The Stalinist bureaucrats are afraid that to remove Badoglio would be to unleash the forces of the socialist revolution to a pitch beyond their control; that it would not stop at the treacherous stage of popular frontism, but that the workers in the industrial North once “liberated” would move irresistibly in the direction of the socialist revolution, smashing the Stalinist organisations in the process. This would constitute a mortal danger to the usurpers in the Kremlin and for that reason they prefer, if possible, to bolster up the reactionary and dictatorial regime of Badoglio which has no democratic support among the Italian people.

This is one of the reasons for the policy of Stalinism, in recognising the reactionary Badoglio government. Another reason is the differences among the so-called “United Nations.” Basing himself on an agreement with British and American imperialism against the socialist revolution, nevertheless Stalin is afraid of his allies and attempts to manoeuvre in the game of power politics in the same way as they do. They have been bolstering up Badoglio as a prop against the Italian workers but also to serve their imperialist interests. Not in the least interested in democracy and freedom, they have postponed the question of the regime in “liberated” Italy till the capture of Rome. They have done this with the obvious intention of strengthening the monarchy and its accomplices and agents and facing the masses with a *fait accompli*. But the Stalinists, to use the old phrase “have been getting in first.”

In a leading article, the Times reveals the annoyance of the British imperialists and demands the coordination of the foreign policy of the Allied powers, but at the same time it cannot repress its malicious glee at the discredit which Stalin's policy brings on the Soviet Union in Italy. In the Times of March 15th we read:

“Many persons who have hitherto regarded them [Badoglio and the monarchy – EG] as standing for every sort of anti-democratic influence and Soviet Russia as a pattern for all virtues will be compelled to change their view when they see the king and marshal Badoglio exchanging friendly messages with marshal Stalin. Thus the scales will be for the moment appreciably tilted in favour of the monarchy and against the republic.”

The Stalinists in Italy have based their whole policy on a fake struggle against Badoglio. Yesterday the British Stalinists made the same empty gestures. Now they write on the recognition of this gangster regime:

“But seems probable that the British government will follow the Soviet government in establishing direct diplomatic relations with the Badoglio government.”

And in its leader column this organ of conscienceless hacks in some embarrassment writes with feigned pride of the exorcising of the “Bolshevik bogey” by this latest example of Stalinist diplomacy. They write truer than they think. By this new act, the Stalinist bureaucrats show clearly that they stand on the other side of the class barricades. But these traitors are mistaken. No power in the world will be able to dam the tide of mass revolt that is developing in Europe. Today the heroic Italian workers are defying the terror of the Gestapo and the SS. Tomorrow, no Badoglio, no king will be able to hold them down. The Allies may dream of supporting these reactionaries with the aid of Anglo-American bayonets. The workers and soldiers of Britain and America will not allow themselves to be used to repress the revolt of their class brothers struggling for socialism. Together with the workers of Europe and Russia they

will establish the socialist united states of Europe.

# **Second front and the tasks of the working class**

## **Statement of the political bureau of the Revolutionary Communist Party**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 1, Mid-June 1944]

The second front has been launched and the most decisive phase of the military struggle in the course of the war is about to commence. By sea and air, hundreds of thousands of men are being flung into Europe in preparation for what is undoubtedly the final phase of the battle of the armies.

Simultaneously with the opening of the second front, the Anglo-American imperialists have opened up a tremendous press campaign to infuse the British workers with a determined “will to victory” and to prepare them for the mounting toll of casualties in what is likely to be the bloodiest period of struggle.

From a military point of view it appears that the “Allies” now have superiority of arms and men and that the war is undoubtedly at the “beginning of the end.”

Hundreds of thousands, probably millions, of the cream of all the nations will

die on the beaches and in the battles which are now opening up: rich manure out of which the imperialists of all nations, fascist and democratic alike, plan to reap untold profits. These men, who will give their lives, are told that their historic mission is the destruction of fascism and the liberation of Europe.

But the capitalists lie when they say that these sacrifices will mean the destruction of fascism! They lie when they proclaim that it will lead to the liberation of Europe! So also do their allies and lackeys lie who are in the leadership of the working class movement here in Britain. These blood sacrifices are being made not in the interests of democracy, but of Anglo-American imperialism.

The debacle in North Africa where a deal was done with quisling Darlan, in Italy, where king Victor [Emanuel] and Badoglio replaced Mussolini – and were only removed at the insistence of the masses, despite the protection afforded them by Churchill and Roosevelt; the recent speech of Churchill in which he applauded fascist Franco who butchered the flower of the Spanish working class and peasants: these acts are ample evidence that the programme of Anglo-American imperialism is not an anti-fascist programme, is not a programme of liberation. Only a workers' army united by class bonds and with a class programme can perform these progressive and historic tasks.

The new phase in the military field opens up wide perspectives and a new phase in the political field. The refusal to recognise even the anti-socialist de Gaulle as the new leader of France is evidence that the Allies are leaving themselves free to do a deal with a more reactionary bloc – the Vichyites or another section of the French quislings – that they are leaving themselves free to do another Darlan. This is to be expected if it suits their interests and is in line with their programme and past activities.

But the French workers cannot and will not support such a foul manoeuvre. Nor should they place their hopes and trust in the programme of the apparently more



radical de Gaulle!

The difficulties of the Nazi armies, their defeats and retreats, will undoubtedly uplift and encourage the French masses to organise widespread partisan warfare. The workers and peasants of France will arm themselves and fight for their liberation. Every independent step on the part of the masses in the struggle for national liberation will be greeted with joy on the part of the internationalists – the Trotskyists.

In the period of transition the widespread liquidation of the French quisling capitalists and administrators will be undertaken by the masses – before the leaders of the Allied armies contact the quislings and seek to protect them and incorporate them into the “liberated administration” – as they did in Italy and North Africa. Local government forms will be set up and the centralisation of the partisan bands will commence. But the centralisation of the partisans under the leadership of agents of Anglo-American imperialism, their collaboration and subjugation to the armies of the “Allies”, which follows from the policy of de Gaulle and his so-called socialist and communist allies, is a dangerous policy, fatal to the real interests of a free France and fatal to the socialist aspirations of the French workers and peasants.

Only an independent class policy, a socialist policy, a Bolshevik policy; only centralisation under the leadership of the working class and a Trotskyist party, can lead to a free and united France as part of the socialist united states of Europe. Such a leadership would issue a proclamation to the German soldiers calling upon them to desert their officers, lay down their arms or take them over to the French workers and peasants, and to participate in a policy of class fraternisation. Such a leadership would denounce the policy of national hatred and the subjugation of Germany to a new Versailles and call upon the German workers, together with the workers of all Europe to destroy capitalism and all its political forms, and to organise a free and united socialist states of Europe.

The revolutionists in France will strive for such a policy and will receive the full and unqualified support of the British Trotskyists in that task.

At home the introduction of 1AA, and now the opening of the second front, has given rise to a period of industrial quiet, hesitation and apprehension. The wave of strikes which swept the basic industries has been temporarily calmed. The masses fear the slaughter of their loved ones and hesitate to act in a manner which they believe might endanger their efforts on the military front and prolong the end of the war.

Echoing the ruling class, the Labour, trade union and Stalinist leaders outdo each other in ecstasies of downright jingoism. The Labour and Stalinist leaders out-Vansittart Vansittart in their denunciation of the German people – forgetting that it was their German counterparts, who by their false policies, helped Hitler to come to power, and for whom they bear full responsibility.

For three years the Stalinists have been clamouring for the second front. Every vestige of class programme and class tactic was subordinated in the interests of bringing about this second front. In Parliament, Gallacher, a portrait in renegacy, weeps crocodile tears at the sacrifices the lads are about to make – but he urges them on. The second front has been opened, not to aid the Soviet Union or because of the protestations of Stalin or of his British puppets, but because it suits the military and political interests of the ruling class.

In the Daily Worker the appeal of the French communists has a crosshead: Death to the Boche, demonstrating yet again the foul role that these renegades play in the ranks of the working class. Meanwhile the ruling class repays the Stalinists with a kick in the teeth – even refusing to allow (for reasons of “national security”!) these miserable renegades an accredited representative of the Daily Worker to enter France in common with all the other patriotic press. Treachery to the working class is thus paid with kicks and with thanks.

In the face of the second front, its death and destruction, it is easy to break faith with the socialist programme. It is easy to break faith with the British and international working class. But we Trotskyists refuse to break that faith by not telling the truth about the second front, explaining its aims and objects. We refuse to be silent whilst the fate of humanity is being determined for generations to come. The policy of the Allies, if accepted by the masses will lead to a Europe parallel to the “New Order” of Hitler. It will lead to the rule of quislings equally as vicious and brutal as Laval. Nazism will be destroyed, but reaction will reign.

The British ruling class are preparing to stabilise their position at home after the war. They are preparing for attacks against the rights and organisations of the working class. The arrest of our comrades under the vicious Trade Disputes Act is but the beginning. It will be followed by further attacks under 1AA against the more powerful organisations of the working class.

When the “liberators of Europe” have made their sacrifice, and the rest return home, their democratic liberties will only be returned and extended by yet another battle. This is already widely understood in the ranks of the working class.

In the coming days the false prophets will be tested. All parties and their policies will be seen in the light of big events and battles. We Trotskyists are not sceptics. We have supreme confidence in the working class, in their ability to throw up new revolutionary leaders and to fight for a revolutionary policy.

In Europe and at home the epoch of revolutionary socialism is about to unfold. Our policy of class struggle; of breaking the truce with the capitalists and fighting for Labour to power on a socialist programme; of uniting Europe into a powerful united socialist states together with Britain and the Soviet Union; of

uniting the workers of the world in a socialist society – this policy, we are confident, will appeal to the workers as the only solution for the destruction of capitalism and its ulcers, fascism, political gangsterism, colonial suppressions, reaction and wars.

# **Churchill preparing peace of revenge**

## **Allies offer no hope for German workers**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 6 no. 2, July 1944]

The occupation of the Cherbourg peninsula<sup>[45]</sup> gives the Anglo-American imperialists a point of support for the decisive struggle with their German antagonists. But the most striking aspect of the invasion of Europe has been the desperate resistance of the German soldiers and even the soldiers from the countries conquered by Germany, despite the overwhelming material superiority of the Allies.

Five years of war and three years of slaughter on the Russian front have created havoc within the ranks of the German army. Even the youth who are left are old and haggard, according to the reports of the News Chronicle. Wrinkles in their faces give an indication of the worry and suffering which they have undergone and are undergoing. Despite the hopelessness of their position, as the more serious capitalist press testifies, the fear of the results of defeat keeps them fighting doggedly and determinedly.

The capitalist press, particularly that section such as the Daily Mail and the Sunday Dispatch, which enthusiastically supported Hitler before the war, are demanding severe punishment of all Germans, whom they hold responsible for

the crimes of the Nazis. In this, they are receiving full support from the so-called Communist Party and the Labour and trade union leaders. Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt have been proclaiming that draconic measures will be taken against the German people after Hitler has been defeated. A peace of Carthage will be imposed which will make the Treaty of Versailles look like a benevolent Sunday school treat. This will be a peace similar to the monstrous “peace” which Hitler has imposed on the peoples of Poland, France and other European countries.

In the First World War, the ruling class of the Allied countries pretended to stand for the right of self-determination and democratic freedom of all countries. This policy was summed up in Wilson’s 14 points[46]. At the beginning of this war too, the Allies proclaimed the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms as their aims, in contrast to the slavery which the prospect of Hitler’s victory would mean to the peoples of the world. In the last war, the real plans of the Allies were kept secret until the defeat of Germany, but now, openly, Churchill has announced that the Atlantic Charter does not apply to Germany. By implication he admits that Germany is to be carved up, big slices going to other powers. Thus the aims of the imperialists are cynically expressed.

That the imperialists can speak so openly is due to the policy of Stalin and the Labour leaders. Such statements in the middle of the last war, would have aroused a veritable storm in the labour movement of the entire world. The Stalinists and the Labour leaders have become so degenerate that they have betrayed not only the elementary democratic rights of the peoples, but that internationalism to which they gave lip service in the past.

The capitalists have publicly been doing penance for their “generosity” to Germany after the last war. This time we must be hard, they proclaim.

An examination of the Treaty of Versailles would demonstrate the real nature of their fine philanthropy to beaten foes. Germany was stripped of Alsace-Lorraine, which was handed back to France; the Saar was handed to the virtual control of

France for 15 years; Eupen-Malmedy was handed over to Belgium and Schleswig-Holstein to Denmark; a corridor of Polish territory was created in the living body of Germany which separated East Prussia from the rest of the Reich. All her colonies, in which she exploited the colonial peoples, were taken away from her and the lion's share was seized by Britain. These territorial changes bled Germany to the limit. Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar were among the main iron and coal-producing centres of Germany. Their loss crippled her.

But not content with this, the Allies demanded even more. Germany's merchant marine was confiscated. Her Navy, rather than surrender to the Allies, was scuttled. Reparations were demanded which even the more sober capitalists pointed out, it would be impossible for Germany to pay. It was completely beyond her economic capacity. On top of this, unilateral disarmament was enforced on Germany. The Rhineland was forcibly demilitarised. To complete the picture of the tender way in which Germany was handled by her victors, it should be pointed out that the blockade of Germany was continued long after the armistice was declared, and 1,000,000 German children died from lack of milk as a result.

Versailles meant to the German people hunger, misery, starvation and degradation. Following on their merciless exactions from Germany, Britain and France occupied the Ruhr in 1923 because Germany was unable to pay reparations. As a consequence there was a terrible inflation which ruined the workers and the middle class. The mark dropped at the height of the inflation to the figure of about 12,000,000,000,000 to the pound. This meant insecurity, hunger, want and misery for the overwhelming majority of the population in Germany.

In this war, as the result of the increasing contradictions of capitalism on a world scale, the aims of the Allies make this savage treaty seem like the milk of human kindness. Instead of the Polish corridor cutting off East Prussia from the rest of Germany, the problem is to be "solved" by handing over the rest of East Prussia to Poland. And so with the claims of the rest of the countries overrun by Hitler;

instead of the fantastic figures of reparations demanded from the Germans last time, new figures which stagger the imagination are being worked out. Russia alone is claiming ten to twenty times the figures of Versailles. Lenin referred to the Versailles Treaty as a robbers' dictated peace which would sow the dragons' teeth of new wars; what would he have called this super Versailles?

Now it is these same architects of disaster who have the audacity to blame the German workers for their own crimes.

The war and the terrible destruction, coupled with the wonderful resistance of the Red Army, have created the beginnings of a new mood among the advanced German workers. Had Stalin offered an international socialist alternative, with the brotherly hand of co-operation to the German workers and soldiers, the Red Flag would have already conquered all Europe. Nevertheless it is impossible to hold back the wheel of history. In spite of the assistance rendered to Hitler by the policy of Stalin and Churchill, the German workers are beginning to move. It is doubtful whether Hitler will survive 1944. The unbearable tension is being reached which led to the revolution of 1918. The German workers are preparing to revenge themselves for the crimes of Hitler and the Nazis.

To quote from two reports received by the International Transport Workers' Federation:

“A trade unionist who speaks German fluently; returned in April from a two years' stay in Berlin as a foreign worker, which he undertook in order to study German conditions. He reports that in a factory where he was employed, the forty German workers included two Nazis, two communists and three social democrats. The other German workers were all opposed to the Nazi regime, but did not want to hear of the old parties... The report went on to say that the workers now express their opinions frankly and are inclined to sabotage and ca'canny[47], but would not yet risk a strike.



“...Reports which have come independently from four German districts tell the same tale. Clandestine soldiers’ councils are said to have formed in these reserve battalions. They have even begun to act. They started quietly by protesting with success against the cancelling of warm meals; this was how the revolt in the fleet started in 1918. The reports make it clear that these soldiers’ councils have a political aim, as have those which were formed a good deal earlier in Norway.”

The Allies know this mood of the German workers and that is why they are attempting to poison the minds of the peoples of Britain, America and the Soviet Union against all Germans instead of distinguishing between Nazis and their capitalist backers, and the German workers.

They will not succeed. The workers of Germany and Europe will find their way to the programme of the Fourth International. They will fight for a socialist Germany in a socialist united states of Europe and the world.

# Germany – What next? Behind the generals' revolt

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 4, August 1944]

The recent events in Germany[48] have raised widespread hope and interest in the working class throughout the world. The seemingly solid front which Hitler presented to the world has been broken by a conspiracy of German junkers and generals.

According to the reports, former ardent supporters of Hitler have attempted to assassinate him. And the Nazis have retaliated in their usual gangster-terrorist fashion, by placing all power in the hands of the hated Gestapo and SS chief Himmler.

Whether there was a genuine plot to murder Hitler or not (it seems certain there was) makes no difference to the significance of these events in Germany. They reveal a tremendous split within the German ruling class, which is opening the way to the outbreak of a genuine workers' revolution in Germany and Europe.

“Germany is not only Germany; it is the heart of Europe,” Trotsky warned before Hitler came to power. But now these words assume added gravity and urgency. For events in Germany may decide not only the future of Europe but the future of the entire world.

Hitler has had nothing better as a means of rallying the German people behind him than the threats of the Allies, Stalin included, to dismember Germany. But as the defeats have piled up on all fronts and the misery of the German masses has reached [a] new intensity, the opposition of the German workers has been growing.

The military shock has led to a revival of the underground movement on formidable lines. Reports from the capitalist press in the last four months have indicated strikes in Hamburg, Berlin, Cologne, Essen and other cities. Movements of revolt among the students and other sections of the middle class have led to executions. Mutinies have been reported among the soldiers and sailors – all these are symptoms of the coming storm.

The laws of revolution apply to all countries and to all peoples. The German nation is no different from any other. Those who sought to find a new system of society in Germany and Italy because of the victory of totalitarianism, have been refuted by events. The military defeats have led to a breaking down of the psychological inertia of the masses, and the movement for the overthrow of the hated regime has gathered strength. Lenin, in his analysis of present day society, laid down four conditions for the outbreak of the social revolution. These have been summarised by Trotsky as follows:

“The basic conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution have been established by historical experience and clarified theoretically: (1) the bourgeois impasse and the resulting confusion of the ruling class; (2) the sharp dissatisfaction and the striving towards decisive changes in the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie, without whose support the big bourgeoisie cannot maintain itself; (3) the consciousness of the intolerable situation and readiness for revolutionary actions in the ranks of the proletariat; (4) a clear program and a firm leadership of the proletarian vanguard – these are the four conditions for the victory of the proletarian revolution. The main reason for the defeats of many revolutions is rooted in the fact that these four conditions rarely attain the necessary degree of

maturity at one and the same time. In history, war has not infrequently been the mother of revolution precisely because it rocks superannuated regimes to their foundation, weakens the ruling class, and hastens the growth of revolutionary indignation among the oppressed classes.” (Lev Trotsky, Imperialist war and the proletarian world revolution, May 1940)

Feeling the hot breath of revolution and dreading its consequences, faced with inevitable military defeat, the German ruling class is seeking some way out of the impasse. The coming revolution has announced itself by producing a split in the ranks of the ruling class. The Russian revolution of February 1917 was foreshadowed by the murder of Rasputin two months earlier. He was killed by members of the court nobility in an endeavour to save Tsarism. But despite the fact that he was murdered, the Tsar, under whose influence he had been, continued his policy. But the effect of the assassination was entirely unexpected by the perpetrators. The fissures and quarrels between the ruling class at the top, produced a ferment and excitement at the bottom. The murder, which was intended to save the regime in Russia, acted as a mighty impulse in galvanising the masses into activity for its overthrow.

In Germany, the ruling class, the junkers and capitalists, generals and bishops had gladly handed control of the state over to Hitler. Now they are quaking in their shoes as they consider the revenge the masses might wreak upon them for their crimes. Their sinister mascot Hitler, is turning into a bad-luck charm. They are attempting to rid themselves of what is becoming a millstone round their necks. Thus has come about the conspiracy of the generals. Their perspectives are clear. In the best event, they would bargain with the Allies. In the worst event, if the German masses got out of hand, they would surrender to the Allied capitalists, seeking the protection of the Allied armies against their own working class. That the Allies would respond to such overtures, they have seen in Italy.

From Stalin they have received systematic encouragement. Was it not Stalin who first supported and recognised the regime of the fascist gangster Badoglio in Italy? They are sure that he would come to some like agreement with a German

Badoglio. Stalin's activities have given them no cause for fear. Far from appealing to the German masses on a socialist basis to overthrow Hitler and establish a socialist Germany, he has organised the "Free German" committee in Moscow which is predominantly composed of reactionary military elements, and the "League of German Officers" which boasts such figures among its members as General von Seydlitz, Lt. General Edier von Daniel, Major General Carl Hess and 2nd Lt. Count von Einseidel.

Major Herbert Soesslin, writing in *Freie Deutschland* made their objectives quite clear:

"...We must avert at all costs any repetition of the events of 1918. We must avoid all anarchy and undisciplined behaviour..."

The traditions on which they make their appeals to the German people are those of "Bismarck's Germany", the Germany of the Kaiser. Stalin has underlined this by the appeals on the Moscow radio during the crisis, when they proclaimed that the fate of Germany should be decided by the generals uniting to throw out the Nazis!

The latest reports from Germany indicate that the Nazis have emerged victorious in their struggle with the army clique. This is symbolised by the introduction of the Hitler salute to replace that of the traditional army salute.[49] No doubt Hitler imagines he has scored another June 30th and settled accounts decisively with his internal enemies. Not for him the inglorious collapse of his erstwhile teacher Mussolini! But this time will not be the same as the last. The violence of June 30th confirmed his grip on the power; the violence of July 1944 marks the beginning of the end of Nazism[50]. Metaphysicians imagine that the same act, if repeated successfully, will have the same result. Not so! Hitler succeeded in stabilising his regime in its first phase by his purge because it was directed against the middle class opposition while the workers remained quiescent spectators, their organisations having been destroyed.

But the revolt of the generals reveals to the mass of the workers and soldiers the utter desperation of the situation. Far from crushing the resistance to the regime, the sparks of opposition will be fanned into revolutionary flames. New attempts by cliques within the ruling class are certain. But this is the least important question. The dazed masses have received a shock which will lead to far stronger mass resistance than before. Hitler's triumph will be short-lived. Already reports have appeared of fighting and mass demonstrations in many of the industrial areas of Germany, of whole regiments of soldiers being shot and whole divisions disbanded.

The effects of these events on the German people is evident. The German radio speaks of groups of Germans gathering on the streets excitedly round the radios in shops and newspaper kiosks. Without a doubt the entire population is now discussing the meaning of the putsch. In the factories and streets the workers must be openly voicing their opposition to the hated regime while the Gestapo informers remain silent, not daring to intervene.

All these years in [the] face of insuperable obstacles, small underground groups and organisations have struggled against the Nazis and upheld the ideas of Marxism. Now their time is coming. The underground organisations will gain a mass basis and mass support in the coming months. The mighty traditions of the German workers will result in mass organisations springing up as if from under the ground itself, as in Italy. The German workers will be reinforced by support from millions of foreign workers in Germany. Already bonds of sympathy have secretly been established between German workers working side by side with French, Belgian, Russian and other European workers united by mutual hatred and solidarity against Nazi foremen. We will see factory committees and soviets all over Germany which will unite all the oppressed of whatever race or nationality.

The British capitalists are preparing for this. Churchill stated bluntly in the House of Commons that a communist Germany is a possibility. But, he

explained, the Germans could not escape from the responsibility for the crimes of the Nazis simply by “embracing the communist faith.” The Stalinist traitors published this statement in the Daily Worker without comment! By their silence they endorse Churchill’s statement and this is in line with the policy of Stalin who is preparing to aid Churchill and Roosevelt to drown the German revolution in blood.

The Stalinists know no bounds in their hate incitement against the German workers in its worst form, and even racialism of the Hitler stamp. For example William Rust writes in the Daily Worker on July 2nd:

“We are not dealing with the German people as they were when they rose in 1918. The present generation has been poisoned and brutalised by 11 years of Nazi rule. Millions of the youth behave worse than beasts and the entire nation must take responsibility for the crimes committed in its name.”

But socialists and communists (not in name but in deed) know how to characterise this appeal to the basest instincts of racial chauvinism. The British workers must see that they occupy a key position in relation to the German revolution. The success of the revolution in Germany depends in large measure on the attitude adopted by the British workers and soldiers. Once Hitler has gone, the alleged aim of the European war in “fighting fascism” will have disappeared, but the Allied imperialists will try and occupy Germany long after the conclusion of the war. Whether they succeed or not will be determined by the attitude of the British working class. One thing we know: the appeal to fraternise which the German socialist workers made to the army of occupation in Germany after the last war received a favourable response. The sons of the British Tommies in this war are far more class conscious than their fathers in the last. The response today will be even more favourable.

Military events are giving place to political events. The working class of the world will have the last say. The advanced workers must prepare and not get

caught by surprise by coming events. To the building of the party, the most indispensable condition laid down by Lenin, the advanced workers must dedicate their efforts. A party, basing itself on the tested ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, further enriched by the experiences of the defeats of the workers in the past decades. Such a party exists in the Fourth International. It is weak today but will become a mighty instrument of the socialist revolution.

*British workers! Prepare to support the German revolution! Rally round the banner of the Fourth International! Join the Revolutionary Communist Party!*



# Leon Trotsky

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 6 no. 5, Mid-August 1944]

Four years ago, on August 20 1940, a GPU assassin, Frank Jacson[51], in the pay of Stalin, brutally murdered Leon Trotsky by thrusting a pick-axe into his skull. This act was a calculated blow at the leading brain of the socialist revolution and of the world working class.

Leon Trotsky has been more vilified and slandered by the hired pen men of Stalin than any man in the whole of history. But in spite of all the lies and perversions, in the long run the truth will make its way. The liars serve reactionary ends but those who died for the cause of the working class have always been restored to a position of honour in the memory of mankind.

In the endeavour to gain some plausibility into their scheme, the Stalinists have been compelled to revise the whole history of the Russian revolutionary movement. No less than 17 times has the History of the Russian revolution been written to suit changes in Stalin's policy – and then the author Popov[52] was “liquidated” himself as a “Trotskyist”! Now the thoroughly revised edition of the History of the CPSU, under the personal supervision of Stalin himself, has been issued in hundreds of thousands of copies all over the world.

In this country, Page Arnot wrote two histories of the Russian revolution, the one

contradicting the other. Each “history” further attempts to distort the role of Trotsky and of the other companions of Lenin.

All these lies and falsifications can be swept aside by just one or two simple facts which have appeared in Lenin’s Collected Works. A succinct summary of Trotsky’s political biography appeared as a note to the first edition of Lenin’s Collected Works, in Volume XIV, Part 2, pages 481–82, published by the State Publishing House in Moscow in 1921. Here in these few lines, edited under the sharp eye of Lenin himself, are the answers to all the lies and falsifications concocted in later years by the betrayers of the revolution:

“L.D. Trotsky, born 1881 [1879 – EG], active in the workers’ circles in the city of Nickolayev; in 1898 exiled in Siberia; soon after escaped abroad and participated in the Iskra. Delegate from the Siberian League at the second congress of the Party. After the split in the Party, adhered to the Mensheviks. Even prior to the revolution in 1905, he advanced his own and today particularly noteworthy theory of the permanent revolution, in which he asserted that the bourgeois revolution of 1905 must pass directly into the socialist revolution, being the first of the national revolutions; he defended his theory in the newspaper Nachalo, the central organ of the Menshevik faction published during November-December 1905 in Petersburg. After the arrest of Khrustalov-Nosar, he was elected chairman of the first Petersburg Soviet of workers’ deputies. Arrested together with the Executive Committee on December 3rd, 1905, he was sent into life exile to Obdorsk, but escaped en route and emigrated abroad.”

“Trotsky chose Vienna to live in, and there he issued a popular newspaper, Pravda, to be circulated in Russia. He broke with the Mensheviks and attempted to form a group outside of all factions; however, during the factional struggle abroad he made a bloc with the Mensheviks and the Vyperod group against the bloc between Lenin and Plekhanov, who fought the liquidators. From the very beginning of the imperialist war he took a clear-cut internationalist position, participated in the publication in Nashe Slovo, in Paris, and adhered to Zimmerwald.”

“Deported from France, he went to the United States. On his return from there after the February revolution, he was arrested by the government of Kerensky and indicted for ‘leading the insurrection’ but was shortly freed through pressure from the Petersburg proletariat. After the Petersburg Soviet went over to the Bolsheviks, he was elected chairman and in this capacity he organised and led the insurrection of October 25th. Standing member of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1917; a member of the Council of People’s Commissars; Commissar of Foreign Affairs up to the signing of the Brest Treaty, then People’s Commissar of War.”

The whole world stands in admiration of the Red Army at the present time. It is showing what can be accomplished even under a degenerate leadership like that of Stalin, by the army of a workers’ state. But without the foundations laid by Trotsky, these achievements would have been impossible. From Lenin himself we have the testimony as to the role which Trotsky played in the building and shaping of the Red Army:

“Show me another man who would be able in a year to organise almost a model army; yes, and win the esteem of the military specialists.”[53]

Today, Stalin and his henchmen pretend that it was Stalin who organised the October insurrection. Without even a smile, these hypocrites, from Stalin down, will say that all the “practical work” was accomplished by them, fighting all the while against the machinations of Trotsky! But the book published by the Communist Party in Britain, *October Revolution by Stalin*, shows that in telling so many lies they have lost track.

On one page Stalin says:

“All the work of practical organisation of the insurrection [of October 1917] was conducted under the immediate leadership of the president of the Petrograd soviet, comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee, the party owes principally and above all to comrade Trotsky.”

But a few pages later he says:

“Comrade Trotsky played no particular role either in the party or the October insurrection, and could not do so, being a man comparatively new to our party in the October period.”

The achievements mentioned above would be sufficient to enrol Trotsky forever as one of the greatest of the revolutionary leaders of the working class. But the honour and devotion with which the workers in future generations will regard him will not be based mainly upon these: it will be upon his work in fighting against the Stalinist reaction and preparing the way for the new revolutions of the working class throughout the world.

Lenin educated the cadres of Bolshevism on an analysis of the defeated Russian revolution of 1905, and on the teachings of Marx on the reasons for the collapse of the Paris commune of 1871. It was in this school that the victorious revolution of 1917 was prepared. Trotsky’s struggle against the Stalinist traitors began with an analysis of the reasons for the defeat of the German revolution of 1923. A defeat for which Stalin shared complete responsibility with Zinoviev and others. Not only Germany of 1923, but the Chinese revolution, the British general strike, the danger of Hitler’s coming to power in Germany, the Spanish revolution, the revolution in France, the nature and meaning of fascism, the nature of the soviet state and the Stalinist bureaucracy – all these questions, well in advance of events, were analysed and their content elucidated.

Not for nothing did Lenin say that without a revolutionary theory there could be no revolutionary movement. While Stalinism has staggered on from one betrayal to another, the living essence of Marxism has been preserved in the writings of Trotsky since the death of Lenin. Without a study of these writings, anyone who pretends to understand socialist theory must remain politically ignorant and illiterate. Even a study of the other great teachers by itself is not sufficient, but would leave a one-sided view of the tendencies and meaning of world politics in modern times.

The victory of Hitler marked a decisive turning point in the fate of the Comintern. Trotsky fought hard and desperately to change the policy compounded of folly and treachery, whereby the Communist Party split and paralysed the German workers, thus handing them over bound hand and foot into the clutches of the Nazi executioners. His books and articles on Germany constitute an imperishable guide to the tactic of the united front and an indictment of the responsibility of Stalinism for the disastrous victories of fascism in Europe.

“If Hitler comes to power, and proceeds to crush the vanguard of the German workers, the fascist government will be the only government capable of waging war against the USSR... In case of victory in Germany, Hitler will become the super-Wrangel of the world bourgeoisie.” (Leon Trotsky, Germany, the key to the international situation, 1931)

“In the struggle against fascism the factory councils occupy a tremendously important position. Here a particularly precise programme of action is necessary. Every factory must become an anti-fascist bulwark, with its own commandants and its own battalions. It is necessary to have a map of the fascist barracks and all other fascist strongholds, in every city and in every district. The fascists are attempting to encircle the revolutionary strongholds. The encirclers must be encircled. On this basis, an agreement with the social democratic and trade union organisations is not only permissible, but a duty. To reject this for reasons of

‘principle’ (in reality because of bureaucratic stupidity, or what is still worse, because of cowardice) is to give direct and immediate aid to fascism.

“A practical programme of agreements with the social democratic workers was proposed by us as far back as September 1930. What has the leadership undertaken in this direction? Next to nothing. The central committee of the Communist Party has taken up everything except that which constitutes its direct task. How much valuable, irretrievable time has been lost! As a matter of fact, not much time is left. The programme of action must be strictly practical, strictly objective, to the point, without any of those artificial ‘claims’, without any reservations, so that every average social democratic worker can say to himself: ‘What the communists propose is completely indispensable for the struggle against fascism.’ On this basis, we must pull the social democratic workers along with us by our example, and criticise their leaders who will inevitably serve as a check and a brake. Only in this way is victory possible.” (Leon Trotsky, For a workers’ united front against fascism, December 8 1931)

The criminal refusal to form a united front and the failure to learn the lessons of the defeat led inevitably to the passing over of the Comintern to the side of the capitalist counter-revolution. It was then that Trotsky came out for the formation of the Fourth International, unsullied by the infamous sell-outs of the internationals which had outlived themselves.

The road was hard and tiring. The Trotskyists remained a tiny minority within the ranks of the world working class. They endured persecution and hatred not only from the capitalists but from the agents of the Stalinist reaction. But Trotsky’s profound understanding of the process of history led him to show the further development of events surely and accurately. The task then was to train the vanguard, though it remains temporarily a small minority. And in all the important countries of the world that precious leaven lives and works.

Trotsky showed that the failure of the old organisations of the workers to solve

the problem of our time, the contradiction between the development of the means of production and the fetters of private ownership and the national state, led inevitably to a new imperialist war. Equally inevitable would be the betrayal of the Stalinists and the Second International in their support for the imperialist war. Trotsky ridiculed the fantastic illusions of Stalin that in such a world conflagration, Russia would be able to keep out. But at the same time, stressed to the world proletariat the necessity for the defence of the Soviet Union despite the treachery of Stalin.

All the forces of the old society were responsible for the war, he showed. The war would bring in its train the death agony of fascism, imperialism and social-democracy and Stalinism. The imperialists can make the war; they will not make the peace. In the war and its aftermath, the imperialists would be called to account for their crimes. A new era of revolutions would begin, which would revise all the decisions reached on the battlefield.

An understanding of the developments in the war and its aftermath is given us by the use of the weapons forged in the arsenal of Trotsky, using of course the method of Marx and Lenin. But it is an historical irony that the pieces that remain of the “stinking corpse” of the once revolutionary international founded by Lenin and Trotsky, should be one of the main obstacles in the path of the emancipation of the working class. Their preparation for the revolution at the present time consists in the propagation of the vilest form of incitement to chauvinism and race hatred, which out-Vansittarts Vansittart and even out-Hitlers Hitler’s racial insanity. But all this nationalist poison was foreseen in advance. Violation of the principles of Marxism inevitably leads to opportunist crimes in practice. The germ of this disease was lodged in the theory of “Socialism in one country”, which has come to mean “No socialism anywhere at all”.

The cleansing wave of revolution will put all tendencies to a new and ruthless test. The ideas of Bolshevism, of Trotsky, will become the ideas of the international working class. The revolutionary essence of Trotsky’s teaching lies in the necessity for a revolutionary party with a revolutionary leadership trained

and educated in the ideas of Marxism, enriched by the lessons of the events of the past century, and thus provided with a through and through revolutionary policy.

The whole of Trotsky's life was dominated by this single aim. He showed how, time and again, the masses had been driven on to the revolutionary road by the crimes of capitalism. The masses had revealed the heroism and self-sacrifice necessary to achieve victory many times in Spain, China, Germany, Italy and other countries. Only once in the Russian Revolution of 1917 were they victorious. And they were victorious because of the existence and policy of the Bolshevik Party and a Bolshevik leadership, basing itself on Marxian theory.

Trotsky's greatest contribution lies not in the years of the successes of the international working class, in which he played a great and heroic role, but in the years of the greatest defeats and disasters of the workers, his hardest and most persecuted years.

In these years Stalin conducted a personal vendetta seldom equalled in history, in which he murdered not only Lenin's and Trotsky's co-workers, many of Trotsky's secretaries and many leaders of the Fourth International, but even Trotsky's children. One he drove to suicide and the rest he assassinated. And after nearly a score of attempts he finally succeeded in killing Trotsky. This was undoubtedly a terrible blow against socialism and against the world working class. But it was not a decisive one. It will not save capitalism or even the Stalinist bureaucracy itself. Trotsky was murdered. But it is impossible to murder his ideas and his methods. These live on in the work of the Fourth International. Even in the hour of his death the "Old Man" (as his disciples called him) indicated the confidence he had in the success of his life work. He gave a message to inspire those left behind, to carry on his work: "Go forward! I am sure of the victory of the Fourth International!"



# Capitalists fear armed Paris workers

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 5, September 1944]

The Nazis have been routed in France. But most significant has been the mass movement of the French workers in Paris and throughout France, in taking up arms against the Nazi oppressor.

It has been this mass movement of the French workers, peasants and middle class which has forced the retreat of the German army. The culminating point, which has marked the entry of the French masses once again onto the arena of history, was the insurrection of the workers of Paris.

Despite the capitalist censorship of the news from Europe and the meagre reports that have been allowed to come through, it is possible to piece together the chain of events. As the Allied armies marched towards Paris, on August 13th, the workers in the industrial suburbs began demonstrations which rapidly developed into armed insurrection, despite the little equipment possessed by the workers. The strike broke out throughout the Paris area which brought the life of the capital completely to a stand-still. The strike involved the French railwaymen, thus preventing the Nazis from moving troops and supplies to and from the capital. So powerful was the movement and so intense the feeling of the masses that two days after the insurrection had broken out, even the Paris police came out on strike and joined the insurrectionaries. Barricades were set up in all the working class districts of Paris and tens of thousands, armed with revolvers, sticks and rifles were joined on the barricade by hundreds of thousands without

arms.

Thus, within a few days, despite, the fact that the Nazis possessed many tanks and other heavy equipment, they were completely defeated. It is noteworthy that the capitalist de Gaullists, who had placed themselves at the head of the movement with the assistance of the Stalinists and reformists, quickly made a truce with the Nazi generals at a time when the movement was developing successfully. The Nazi troops were to be allowed to withdraw from Paris within 48 hours of the agreement which had been signed.

The reason for this is not hard to find. It was not tender humanitarianism but fear for their property which might be destroyed in the fighting. Thus the Nazis were enabled to gain time, draw in reserves, and continue the struggle for several more days at the cost of many more workers' lives.

In 1940 the French capitalists sold Paris to Hitler without a struggle for the same reason – fear of the destruction of their property. But also because of their fear of an armed working class which could see their degeneration and corruption clearly, and which might take control of Paris and then the whole of France. The nightmare of a new and more permanent occupation of the factories as in the great stay-in strikes of 1936 obsessed them. Then they had been saved by the workers' leaders through the policy of popular frontism. But they were not sure it would suffice them now!

### **Capitalists fear armed workers**

The de Gaullist leadership was compelled to place itself at the head of the present uprising for fear that the movement would get out of control and also to demonstrate to Anglo-American imperialism that they were the only force in France with whom the Allies could deal. Thus they issued the call to

insurrection.

*But immediately the Nazis were driven from Paris, the main preoccupation of the capitalist forces has been the disarming of the Parisian workers. The entire capitalist press has reported this as one of the “major” problems with which the de Gaullist government is faced. The Herald of August 29th, says:*

“But another problem facing General Koenig, new commandant of Paris, will be to get the Maquis underground and demobilised soldiers of the French Force of the Interior[54] to lay down their arms. To wean the high-spirited youths, who are still racing through the city in their small cars, waving flags and brandishing weapons, back to the hum-drum existence of labour and rebuilding, will be one of his weightiest problems.”

The News Chronicle of August 30th reports an even more far-fetched excuse for the disarming of the workers who freed Paris:

“To organise the legions of armed French youths now wearing the armband of the FFI, and training them into a disciplined force, General Koenig will first of all disarm those not at the moment authorised to carry arms. In this way the attempts of Darnand’s militia[55] and German soldiers in civilian uniform to infiltrate into the FFI will be largely defeated.”

This is so much balderdash. It is obviously ridiculous to suggest that the fascists, especially the German troops, could enter the FFI. How many German soldiers can speak French sufficiently well to pretend to be Frenchmen? They would give themselves away immediately. In addition to which, according to the reports of the correspondents, the only German troops in Paris are prisoners. Their captors would have to be very obliging to allow them to change into civilian clothes and enter the Maquis. So far as the fascists are concerned, those of Darnand’s militia

who have not been dealt with or arrested by the armed workers would be only too glad to skulk into some corner where they would not be recognised.

That the ostensible reason for disarming the French workers is false, is shown by an article in the Manchester Guardian of August 31st by their military correspondent, headed: Demobilising the guerillas. In this the anxiety of the ruling class at the possibility of an armed people in Europe is revealed frankly:

“It would be dangerous sentiment to feel that because a man has been a hero in battle he can be excused if he shows signs of anti-social behaviour when the battle is over.”

It is control of the arms for their own ends that the capitalists are after. They are deadly afraid of the armed workers, who have especially bitter memories of the collaboration of the French bankers and trust magnates with their Nazi colleagues in the exploitation and repression of the French masses. They have many scores to settle with the capitalists who made agreements with Hitler. But apart from a handful of capitalists who they will have to sacrifice as scapegoats, the de Gaullists represent precisely the interests of the big capitalists, despite their demagogic programme. As in Italy, so in France, the Allies will protect them.

## **Swing to the left**

Already the masses have begun revolutionary seizures. The Paris press, which functioned as an instrument of Nazi propaganda, has been seized by the armed legions of the underground movement. This act alone, which violates the sacred rights of private property, must have sent shivers of fear down the spines of the capitalists.

The Daily Worker reports that the circulation of the workers' papers now published in Paris on the presses seized by the underground, is higher than the rest of the press put together! L'Humanité, Communist Party organ, has a circulation of 200,000. Populaire, organ of the Socialist Party has a circulation of 160,000, and twelve capitalist papers together, only 120,000! These figures indicate the revolutionary movement of the French masses, which the Stalinists and reformists will not hold back for long. Before the war, in all France the circulation of Populaire was only 60,000! The tremendous increase in its circulation in the Paris area alone, where formerly the Stalinists were completely dominant, shows the swing to the left of the masses. Socialist Party policy has been more "left" than that of the Stalinists, so the workers have swung towards them. This position in the first hours of liberation, indicates the beginning of the revolutionary wave which can only grow more intensive and deep as the masses see the real programme of de Gaulle and Anglo-American imperialism in action. Workers, peasants and middle class will all be driven on the road of social revolution. The demonstrating crowds are demonstrating for socialism and freedom – even if this is not clearly expressed. That the capitalists realise this is shown by the haste with which they are raising the problem of disarming the workers.

## **They remember the Commune**

It is the memory of French history too, which they fear. Paris is a city of revolution. In 1789, 1830, 1848 and in 1871 the Parisians rose in insurrection. For the first time in history the Paris workers seized power in 1871 and organised the glorious Paris commune. The capitalists have not forgotten that this took place after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war when the Paris workers organised the armed National Guard – at a time when the Prussian army was at the gates of Paris and when the corruption and degeneracy of the French capitalists was manifest to the workers. But they should remember too, that what caused the complete overthrow of the capitalist government in Paris was the attempt of Thiers to disarm the Paris workers.

Then, as now, in order to retain control, the capitalists had to destroy any independent armed organisation of the masses. This fear of the revenge of the people is also shown by the attempts to divert the anger of the French masses from the real criminals – this is seen by the treatment of women who have had relations with German soldiers. Hooligans have been photographed shaving off the hair of their heads in public, and women have been forced to march through the streets unclothed.

That this will not be successful is indicated by the report of one correspondent who reports the disapproval of this practice by a small woman shop-keeper. He reports that she suggested instead, the punishment of “merchants”, etc., who had collaborated with the Nazis. What she no doubt expressed was that the real criminals should be punished – the big trusts and combines who notoriously have had intimate relations with the Nazi trusts and combines.

France is celebrating in “unity” her liberation from the Nazis, according to de Gaulle and others. That the masses are overjoyed at the defeat of the Nazi oppressor after four years of occupation, is clear enough. That because of the foul propaganda of the Communist Party and Socialist Party, the workers do not clearly differentiate between the Nazis and the German workers, is probably to a great extent true. But how long will this last?

Anglo-American imperialism will hold France and all Europe in slavery to their financial dictatorship. The awakening after the first joy of liberation will be rapid and profound.

*The ruling class will tremble for the coming period. Paris has spoken! In the coming days the full meaning the uprising of the Paris workers will become clear. They threw out the Nazis; they can just as easily throw out the French capitalists too.*

Paris and France will yet present their reckoning for the crimes of French imperialism. Red Paris has spoken, but it has not yet said its final word. The French Trotskyists will play their part in the coming days. Events will show the Paris workers soon enough who are their real enemies and who are their real friends. They will spurn the treacherous class-collaborationist policy of the Stalinists and reformists. After Rome and Warsaw comes Paris. These are just the beginnings of the revolutionary movement which will sweep all Europe. Paris workers will remain true to socialism and internationalism!

The workers of France will fight for a soviet France together with a socialist united states of Europe!

# **The Allies fear fraternisation**

## **Hate campaign against German people**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 6, October 1944]

The Allies have entered Germany and already in the tiny corner they occupy, they have shown their aims and intentions.

A hard and merciless peace against the Germans, has been promised. The “generosity” of Versailles is not to be repeated. The suggestion is made that Germany is to be occupied by the Great Powers for 10 years or more. Threats of dismemberment, handing the Rhineland to France; East Prussia, Silesia and Pomerania up to the Oder to the Poles; bits and pieces to Holland, Belgium and Denmark; and threats that Germany will be divided in two as Separate entities – all this is held out to the German masses as the happy result of Allied victory.

No wonder they have resisted desperately both in the East and in the West.

And now, this very resistance engendered by Allied policy is to be used as the excuse for the carrying out of their threats! Here we have a vicious circle. But an intentional one. The Allied imperialists want the Germans to resist. They want



the German workers to fight desperately. Even though this may mean the lives of tens and hundreds of thousands of British, American, and Russian soldiers.

In an article in the Daily Express, as early as the 28th March of this year, called Why don't the Germans crack? written by Paul Holt, the comment is made that six million of the German people at that date were already homeless.

“When Hitler sent troops marching in for the occupation of Hungary, to keep Horthy's tail up, the news was received throughout Germany with ‘utter apathy’.

“Then what keeps the Germans steady? Fear. Strength through fear is what they've got.”

Holt cynically goes on to comment:

“The march of events and the pronouncements of the leaders of their enemies huddle them together and deprive them of their last alibi.”

“Where else can they turn but to the Nazis who brought all this upon them? What other power or strength do they have to turn to? Since they must die as a nation by the sword, they resolve to live a little longer by the sword.

“And, reviewing this, the Allied leaders are content...”

Thus, the responsibility for the support of Hitler rests entirely on the shoulders of

Allied imperialism.

Yet despite this, in spite of all the crimes of Allied imperialism, their knowledge of what awaits them should they be defeated, the resistance of the German workers against Hitler has been growing greater and greater in the last period. It is now a race between the Allies and the revolution. Which will conquer first. Even the capitalist press, rigidly censored, day by day, reveals what is taking place in Germany.

The Daily Telegraph of May 1st, reports of a revolt in Dresden as follows:

“After a revolt recently by anti-Nazi elements in Dresden, the bodies of hundreds of rioters who had been shot were left lying in the streets as a warning to others.”

“...The immediate cause of the revolt is not clear, but it is known that the anti-Nazi element among the workers is increasing rapidly in the city.”

The Journal de Genève in an article entitled The struggle against defeatism in Germany, says:

“In a big town in Southern Germany executions take place at least three times a week. This town is no exception. Even so, the fate of its inhabitants appears almost enviable compared with that of Berliners or Viennese.”

“I am alluding only to the executions of civilians – that is to say, saboteurs,

defeatists, disparagers of the regime, enemy agents, etc. The German ‘resistance’ also has its victims. They are mostly workers and shopkeepers.”

Dozens of reports have come through recently, of strikes, mutinies, armed clashes and rebellions inside Germany. The most recent being reported in the Evening Standard on September 23 1944:

“The miners of Saarbreucken have left the pits and are on strike.”

The terror in Germany has reached the greatest heights since the coming to power of Hitler. Tens of thousands are being arrested, thousands murdered in the concentration camps. Workers in Austrian factories came out on strike after the murder of Thälmann and Breitscheid[56]. Two thousand planes have been kept in reserve by Himmler to deal with the home front, according to the Daily Telegraph.

It is significant that all news of the class struggle in Britain and America has been suppressed by Goebbels’ censorship. The strikes of the miners in Britain and America were never reported to the German workers for fear that this would reveal to the German masses that there were two Britains and two Americas as well as two Germanies; not only the Britain of Churchill but the Britain of John Maclean[57]; not only the America of Roosevelt, but the America of Eugene Debs[58].

This is the greatest crime of the British Labour and Communist Party leaders: that they, who have a relative amount of freedom, are preparing to support the repression of the German masses who are conducting the struggle so heroically against great odds, especially the odds of the Allied terms.

These smooth-tongued traitors, viciously slander the German masses and prepare to justify the imposition of imperialist repression on the German masses as bad as the slave regime imposed by Hitler in France and other European countries, and to justify the reduction of the German masses to a condition of colonial servitude like that of the Indians. Lenin said that the Versailles Treaty had reduced the German people to that of a colonial or semi-colonial bondage. Now, Stalin goes the whole hog. In justification for his policy, the Moscow radio broadcasts:

“The world has begun to generalise. There is now little difference made between Nazis and Germans. This difference will soon disappear completely.”

“If Hitler is not overthrown now by the Germans themselves, the German nation may miss the last, the very last chance of reconciliation of forgiveness, even of mercy.”

The plans for Germany are revealed in all their stark reaction. Eisenhower announces in a proclamation that they come, not as “oppressors” of the Germans from the yoke of the Nazis, but as “conquerors”. The difference between “oppression” and conquest will be difficult to find when one reads the decrees of the military government. They contain the following provisions:

Curfew from 9 am to 6 pm. Travel forbidden without a special pass. Gatherings of more than 5 people for the purpose of discussion in either public or private, are prohibited. Firearms to be given up. Newspapers, publications and posters of any kind will not be printed, disseminated nor posted. Public officials to stay at their posts.

These provisions establish Hitlerism without Hitler. The racial doctrine of the Nazis, but applied now to the Germans – and all this in the name of “extirpating

Hitlerism"! Those provisions of the decrees banning the Nazi Party, its insignia and banners are meant clearly to throw dust in the eyes of the British and American people. The masses have no love for Hitler and once the SS and Gestapo have been removed they would automatically disappear without the "aid" of Eisenhower. On the contrary, far from destroying the Nazis – especially the bureaucrats who have faithfully carried out their crimes – these measures are meant to protect them. In this town an "independent" Nazi has already been appointed mayor – and this is in keeping with the policy of the Allies.

In an editorial in the Manchester Guardian of August 8 1944, they cynically remark:

"To whom will the occupying armies turn for help in administration if not to the Nazi bureaucracy?"

Had the Allies been really interested in smashing the Nazis instead of preventing elections, they would hold a democratic election; instead of preventing political expression in newspapers, they would encourage it.

"They [the Germans – EG] don't seem to labour under the delusion of having lost their freedom to conquerors because they are accustomed to not having any – or rather they feel merely that they have passed from one form of military discipline to another."

Here is the secret of this poisonous campaign, of this Hitlerite racialism, on the part of British and American imperialism and their lackeys. It is not because the masses in Germany support Hitler, but because they are against Hitler. The German workers have gone through the experience of Kaiserism, "democracy", fascism, what else have they left except socialism? And the ruling class are preparing to out-Hitler Hitler in bloody repressions against the German masses.

In this, of course, they will receive the support of the very elements who organised Hitler: the capitalists, generals and the Nazi bureaucrats. They will become Allied quislings.

It is not they who will be suppressed and suffer; it is the German workers, peasants and middle class. But the German workers will resist with desperation this repression which will not differ in the least from that of Hitler, except that it comes from a foreign oppressor. In spite of all, the German masses have resisted and are resisting the Nazis. How much more so will they resist Allied oppression?

But the Allies are anxious because it is not merely the German masses they have to deal with, but their own workers too. The workers are supporting the war because they wish to wipe out Hitlerism, but they have no quarrel with the ordinary German workers, women and children. That is why the imperialists – not content with their lies that a German and a Nazi is one and the same – have poured forth a spate of propaganda in the last few weeks that the Nazis are preparing to “go underground” in Germany. This propaganda is nothing but a preparation for repression against the German workers. They are expecting resistance and this is their method of preparing to meet it. The example of Italy has shown that once the masses are free from the iron heel of fascism, it is not so easy to replace it. According to the reports in the capitalist press itself, the Republican fascists have utterly failed to gain any support except from a few crack-brains and cranks in Southern Italy. And in the North, despite German bayonets, hundreds, and even thousands of fascists have been murdered by the workers.

British workers! Do not be deceived! And the British workers will not be deceived. Already, Stalin and his hacks together with the capitalist press in Britain and America, are holding up their hands in horror at what is taking place in Germany. The News Chronicle of September 22 1944 reports:

“The Soviet press has expressed its relief and satisfaction at the strong protests raised in this country against the first symptoms of fraternisation by Allied troops with German civilians.

“The Red Army has behaved with perfect propriety to the civilian populations in its advance towards Berlin, and will doubtless continue to do so. But what the Russians fear is a growth of an easy-going temper among the Western Allies which might emasculate the peace terms.

“They say with stern clarity that punishment for a terrible crime against humanity must precede rehabilitation – and that if a repetition of the crime is to be prevented the German people must accept their share of the responsibility.”

The British and the American armies have issued stern orders against fraternisation with the Germans under penalty of severe punishment. As these reports indicate, within 24 hours of the American army reaching Germany, fraternisation had already begun. If that is the position now, what will it be when the Allied armies reach the big industrial centres in Germany: Cologne, Berlin and Hamburg?

The American and British workers will not allow themselves to be converted into SS and Gestapo executioners. Inevitably they will fraternise, in spite of all orders, with the German workers and peasants. In the House of Lords, one of the commanders who had experience of this fraternisation which compelled the withdrawal of the Allied armies after the last war, warned of the necessity to send the wives and children of the soldiers of the occupying force to Germany. The fears of the ruling class are justified. In the place of reactionary racialism and nationalism which lays the seeds of new world wars, the class solidarity of the workers will break through in spite of the sell-out of the Labour and Stalinist leadership.

*The workers of Germany and Britain will fight for a socialist Germany and a socialist Britain in a socialist Europe.*



# **National question - Rough draft**

**By Ted Grant**

[\[59\]](#)

[No date, presumably October 1944]

For CC members only

## **Problems posed by Hitler's victories**

The Napoleonic victories of Hitler in Europe posed in a sharp fashion the necessity for a re-examination of the perspectives and tasks of the European revolution. Such an examination could only be conducted on the basis of the scientific method and analysis of Bolshevism. The Fourth International characterised our epoch as an epoch of wars and revolutions. The rise and victories of fascism were not an expression of a new period of bloom for the historically outlived capitalist system but a reflection of the impasse in which European society had been plunged by the insoluble contradictions engendered by the system itself.

The impasse in which the proletariat found itself was caused, not by objective conditions, but by the failure of the old workers' organisations to overthrow capitalism and solve the problems of society by the seizure of power. This led to terrible defeats and the crushing of the workers' movement throughout Europe.

The complete prostration and capitulation of Stalinism and Reformism to the democratic imperialists further exerted their pressure on the vanguard.

Disorientated by these events some comrades of the emigration succumbed to the pressure of the bourgeois democratic forces and demanded that the class struggle in Europe should be subordinated to the drive for “national freedom”:

“Everything will be levelled to a desire for the overthrow of this enemy and, in fact it must be recognised that without it there can be no question of change in existing conditions.”

This is entirely opposed to the basic conceptions developed by Trotskyism[60]. The collapse of whole national states in front of the invading forces of German imperialism was a reflection of the fact that the national state had outlived itself. It is true, that Hitler had reduced the whole of Europe to national as well as social slavery, but precisely because of this the class struggle was posed in an acute form.

For Marxists, the bourgeois democratic revolution and the national question had long since been solved in Europe. It was on the rise of the bourgeoisie, when it still fulfilled a progressive historical mission that the question of the bourgeois democratic revolution and of national liberation were historically posed for Europe. Even then, in Germany in 1848, when faced with the threatening challenge from the young, but vigorous proletariat, far from carrying through a revolution, the bourgeoisie were thrown into the arms of the reactionary Junkers and the Monarchy as a protection against the danger from the proletariat. The action of the French bourgeoisie in surrendering to Hitler in 1940 was dictated by similar considerations. This in itself should have posed the problem from a class point of view in a clear light.

The theory of the Permanent Revolution is based upon the idea that in the modern epoch the bourgeoisie of backward countries – let alone advanced industrialised or semi-industrialised ones – is incapable of carrying to a

successful conclusion the struggle for national liberation against imperialism. In India and China and the other countries of the East because of the link between the national bourgeoisie, imperialism and the feudal and church interests, the colonial bourgeoisie is incapable of waging a struggle against imperialism and carrying out the bourgeois democratic revolution. The petty bourgeoisie is incapable of playing an independent role but must follow either the camp of the proletariat or be dragged in the wake of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the leading role in the bourgeois democratic revolution must be played by the proletariat. But the proletariat, while placing itself at the head of the entire nation, must inevitably struggle to obtain state power. To subordinate itself to the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie – and in doing the latter it leads inevitably to the subordination to the former – would mean disaster for the proletariat, defeat of the struggle for national emancipation and collapse of any possibility of bourgeois democracy being established. The experience of the Kuomintang and of Congress in India has demonstrated this irrefutably.

In Europe we have had the experience too, in the Spanish and Russian revolutions, where the belated bourgeoisie revealed its incapacity to solve the problems of the bourgeois democratic revolution. These lessons have illustrated over and over again, that the bourgeoisie is incapable anywhere of carrying out this task.

Taking the theoretical possibility of a complete conquest of China by Japan, Trotsky demonstrated theoretically that this would result in the Chinese bourgeoisie assuming an even more craven role than in the past – it would lead to a complete collaboration between the bourgeoisie of China and the Japanese conquerors. The bourgeoisie would be even more divorced from and opposed to the struggle for national liberation. Thus, this would accentuate the leading role which the proletariat would have to play in the struggle for national freedom. The first movement of the proletariat would be directed not only against the foreign conqueror, but against its own bourgeoisie which would resist and fight against every single movement of the masses which it would recognise as a mortal danger to itself. The proletariat would gather behind it all the forces of the nation in its struggle for emancipation. The hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution would be immediately apparent.

This excursion to the East leads right to the heart of the problem facing us in the West. What revolution is approaching? Is it a bourgeois democratic revolution for “national liberation”, or a proletarian revolution? Our answer or its equivalent to this question must be definite and clear: the bourgeois democratic revolution is a stage which has long since been passed in Europe; the European revolution which is approaching is a proletarian revolution.

The bourgeoisie, especially its dominant sections throughout Europe, collaborated with the fascist victor. The feelings of the proletariat and of the petty bourgeoisie are imbued inevitably with a hatred for the trusts, the combines, and all who collaborated with the Nazis. The struggle of the masses throughout Europe for freedom from national oppression had to take on a class aspect; their hatred was directed not only against the foreign oppressors but also against the ruling class of their own countries who made a good thing out of acting as agents of the foreign conqueror.

It is true that the Stalinists and Social Democrats attempted to emasculate the movement by directing it into nationalist and chauvinist channels. But as in the case of the People’s Front in Spain, the “unity” of the nation was a unity not with the national bourgeoisie, but with its shadow. The bourgeoisie itself was in the camp of the enemy. The task of Bolshevik Leninism, more than ever, should be the raising of the banner of the class struggle, while fighting for national freedom and democratic rights. The task of the proletariat is to win the petty bourgeoisie in the struggle against the big bourgeoisie as well as the invader. The class struggle remained the axis round which all policies should have been crystallised. While preserving an implacable hostility towards the oppression of the occupying power, the Bolshevik Leninists should have raised the slogan of winning over the rank and file soldiers of the German army to the side of the working class of the occupied country. By entering the resistance movement and at every stage counterposing opposition between the interests and policy of the bourgeoisie to that of the masses; by showing the naked class calculations in the policy of finance capital, both of the dominating and subjugated nationalities; by raising the question of the struggle in the factories against the bourgeois owners

and managers, as collaborators and quislings, the class issues should have been emphasised; by showing that the sections of the bourgeoisie which swung over to the resistance movement in the last days, did so only because they realised that the Anglo-American imperialists would be the victors; by demonstrating that from the position of national oppression the bourgeoisie would utilise the defeat of the German-Italian coalition to themselves take part in the oppression, dismemberment and subjugation of the defeated nations; by showing that it is the contradictions of capitalism which were causing the decline of Europe and were responsible for the national cannibalism of imperialism; by raising the problem of unification of all Europe under a soviet united states with full national freedom and rights for all states and minorities within Europe.

### **How the struggles developed in Europe**

Events in Europe fully bear out this analysis. In the Balkans, where the bourgeois democratic revolution has not been carried out, because of the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to solve the task, we have witnessed that within the resistance movement a furious class struggle has raged. In Yugoslavia, in Greece, in Poland, even while the greater part of the country has lain under the heel of German imperialism, the two camps of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie have engaged in bitter civil war – as bitter as the struggle against the Nazis themselves. The struggle for national freedom has been intertwined with the struggle for bread and land; the struggle for democratic rights with the right to live. That has been the situation in Eastern Europe. How much more so in the West?

The advance of Anglo-American armies into Western Europe has answered this question once and for all. The “national” question was immediately revealed as a social question. The release of the pressure of the army of occupation of the conquerors, immediately led to the beginnings, not of bourgeois, but of proletarian uprisings. The workers and the petty bourgeoisie armed themselves in France and in Belgium, and particularly in France began the seizure of the factories and mines, announcing in this way that the proletarian French

revolution had reached a new stage. So great has been the swing to the left – i.e. to the workers’ revolution – that not only the Stalinist and Social Democrats, but even the Bonapartist de Gaulle has to toy with social demagoguery. The mood of the petty bourgeoisie in France is such that de Gaulle pretends to stand for nationalisation of the mines, banks and big combines, and the punishment of all the big capitalists and collaborators of the Comité des Forges, etc.

It might be argued that if Hitler had been victorious the situation would have been entirely different. Not so! It is true, events would have taken a different turn, but the bourgeoisie would have revealed itself even more as utterly alien to the interests of the broad masses by its collaboration with the Nazi overlords. If in China, Trotsky had raised the question that the bourgeoisie would collaborate with the invaders in the event of a complete victory of Japan, how much more so in the case of France, Belgium, Norway or Greece and Yugoslavia?

In the East the time for Empire building has long since passed; the Japanese imperialists did not have the slightest possibility of carving out an empire of any stability like that attained by the British Empire. In Europe, Hitler’s victories could only have been ephemeral, even if they had resulted in complete success. To hold down London, Moscow, Paris, Brussels, would have been beyond the strength of German imperialism. Hitler’s empire would have been built on sand, and would not have lasted even a decade. The inevitable revolts and uprisings would have awakened the class solidarity of the German workers and soldiers. Far from maintaining his hold on the occupied territory, Hitler would have been hard put to it to retain his hold even on Berlin.

### **Problem posed by the victories of the allies**

The ultra-lefts argue that there is no “national” oppression in Europe thus revealing a confused understanding of the attitude of Marxism on this question. The French, Czechs and Poles were oppressed not only as members of the

exploited classes but as members of a subject race. Thus they were oppressed not only socially but nationally as well. That there were different degrees of subjugation and oppression does not alter the position in any way. The revolutionary party fights against all forms of national oppression and domination and strives for the free and unfettered right of all nations to determine their own destiny. It supports the right of every nation to the right of self-determination. It supports the struggle of the small and large nations of Europe for freedom from the yoke of German imperialist oppression. But the bourgeoisie of the subject nations today will become the oppressors and subjugators of the rights of the German and other defeated nations tomorrow. All will remain under the domination of Anglo-American imperialism. While the system of imperialism continues to exist the small and even the big powers can only remain as satellites and appendages of the great powers striving for world domination. Thus, while supporting the struggle for national emancipation the Fourth International does not and cannot conceive it as separate and apart from the struggle for social emancipation. There can be no real solution of the problem of self-determination except on the basis of the destruction of imperialism in Europe and the setting up of the federation of socialist soviet republics. Consequently the struggle for self-determination and national freedom is the struggle for the soviet united states of Europe.[61]

The impending victory of Anglo-American imperialism poses the problem from an entirely different aspect. America intends to place all Europe in chains. But as in the case generally of South America and they hope, of China and India, it will be chains of invisible financial and economic domination. In Germany and possibly in certain of the Balkan states and in “emergency”, i.e. open clashes and civil war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in other countries of Europe, the Anglo-American imperialists will be compelled to resort to military occupation and dictatorship in the first stages at least, to maintain their domination. But generally as far as possible, the bourgeoisie of America especially will prefer the indirect domination which they hope to maintain through their economic and military strength. Because of the danger of provoking of the workers at home in Britain and America, the danger from their own troops, the allied imperialists are compelled to proceed gingerly in their relations with Europe. The bourgeoisie in France, Belgium, Italy and Eastern Europe change their masters with great rapidity. They placed themselves on the side of victors in the struggle. They welcomed the Anglo-American imperialists,

and they rely on their bayonets to stave off an uprising of the workers. But in the minds of the workers, quislings and big capitalists were interchangeable terms. They believed that it was the masses' heroic struggle against the Nazi occupation and the collaborationists which undermined the position of German imperialism. They were embittered at the bourgeoisie's collaboration and immediately began a struggle for economic and political rights.

*The victories of the Red Army directly pose in the minds of the European masses the problem of the conquest of power and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Reaction has a very slender base among the masses even of the petty bourgeoisie. The experience of the war and the economic ruination by inflation and [the] stranglehold of big business, the sell-out of the national bourgeoisie, the general crisis and uncertainty of capitalism, and the mass movement of the workers standing in the forefront of a struggle against oppression, have brought about a tremendous radicalisation among the petty bourgeoisie. On the revolutionary wave which is just beginning, even on the first rise before it has attained any sweep, already it is clear that the petty bourgeoisie and the workers will move rapidly left in spite of all measures to hold them in check. Any attempt at military dictatorship in occupied Europe would lead to disaster for the imperialists. The soldiers of the Allies would not for long tolerate their armies of counter-revolution.*

But the heart of the problem lies in the key position which is now occupied by Germany in the European revolution. That the allied bourgeoisie and the Stalinist bureaucracy realise this clearly is seen by the plans for the military occupation and dismemberment of Germany. The disintegration of the Nazi regime would almost immediately lead to proletarian uprisings which would pose on the order of the day the socialist revolution in Germany. There would be a vacuum created by the dissolution of the totalitarian structure of the Nazi regime. Apart from a few remnants the Nazis would disappear from the scene. However, in the same way as in Europe so in Germany, the bourgeoisie would have no other alternative but to rely on their conquerors. They would become collaborators and quislings of Anglo-American imperialism. Thus the problem of the liberation of Germany from Allied domination and oppression would assume an anti-capitalist form as well as an anti-Allied form. The class struggle



would be manifest in opposition not only to the foreign oppressors but to their agents in Germany itself. Thus the problem for the German workers would be to establish fraternal relations with their class brothers in the Allied armies.

The foreign workers in Germany will play a great role in linking the European with the German working class, but they can only be approached from the angle of the united class resistance to all the oppressors.

In order to ride the storm in the first years it is most likely that before they turn to methods of open repression the bourgeoisie will attempt to make use of the services of the Social-Democrats and Stalinists to paralyse the revolt of the masses.

The fact that the revolution which is approaching in Europe can only be the proletarian revolution does not exclude the possibility that the Allied and European bourgeoisie in their struggle against the revolution may not adopt the methods of bourgeois democracy. The experience of Germany in the 1918 revolution indicated that in its first phases the counter-revolution will take a "bourgeois democratic" or pseudo-democratic form. With the tremendous upsurge of the masses in Europe; with the complications of the bourgeoisie in Asia and the colonies; with the internal problem of the bourgeoisie at home; it would be extremely difficult if not impossible for the allied bourgeoisie to establish military dictatorships over all Europe. With the revolutionary upsurge, with no mass basis for reaction in Europe, any attempts at dictatorship would be extremely short-lived. Thus, the bourgeoisie who are preparing for reprisals and repressions on the one side cannot but take to the road of illusory concessions on the other. The development of the Spanish revolution in the years 1931 to 1936 can be a model for the whole of Europe in the coming period.

There will be similar ebbs and flows in the coming European revolutions. It will pass through various phases inevitably culminating in civil wars. But the European masses themselves are much more conscious of their own strength and

the crisis of capitalism is much worse. The whole continent of Europe will be affected by these upheavals as the war and the events of the last decade have uprooted European society. The [fact that the] masses everywhere are striving instinctively towards a socialist solution is [not in] question. While such regimes are not excluded, temporarily they will only be makeshift and of crisis. One government will follow another in quick succession, with a corresponding rise of the tempo of mass struggles. The bourgeoisie will manoeuvre between repressive measures and concessions.

In some of the European countries an attempt to perpetuate military dictatorships is possible. But all such attempts will only end in civil war and the struggle for power by the workers and the peasants. The comparative weakness of the bourgeoisie leads them to rely on deception as well as on force. The weakness of the proletariat consists in its lack of clarity as to the tasks with which it is faced. Thus in the first stages of the movement the reformists and Stalinists by placing themselves at the head of the movement and directing it into reformist channels will prevent the proletariat from moving to the direct seizure of power. But though the proletariat is not conscious or organised enough (through the revolutionary party) to establish workers' power, it is still conscious enough to resist fiercely any attempt at military dictatorship. Only after a period of terrific class battles and storms, on the basis of decisive defeats of the proletariat could the bourgeoisie succeed in stabilising the situation on the basis of military dictatorships.

In France and in Italy, the Balkans and throughout Europe, the movement has fallen under the control of the Stalinists and Social Democrats, who are attempting to guide it into the harmless channels of popular frontism, parliamentarism, bourgeois democracy and class collaboration. In order to win the masses away from their influence it is necessary to expose them in action. This can only be done through the use of transitional slogans and demands [which] can assume great importance. Together with these the demand for elections and the convening of a national assembly may become part of the agitation for the Bolshevik-Leninists. Simultaneously with these, the demand for a government free from all representatives of capitalism should be developed.

These demands are not separate from and do not exclude the agitation simultaneously for the workers' committees, housewives' committees, employees, arming of the workers and workers' militias, or even the call for soviets, and the setting up of a workers' government.

## **Constituent assembly**

The Constituent assembly may or may not be convened, depending on the relationship of forces. But it can serve as the means for mobilising the masses in action against the bourgeoisie and its agents. By demanding that the self-styled and self-appointed representatives of the people in the provisional and emigré governments should put their claims to the test by allowing the masses to decide, the masses can have their illusions dispelled. The Labour and Stalinist leadership will shelter behind the fact that they do not control the government but remain a minority within it. Break with the bourgeoisie and take control into your own hands! This slogan can become a powerful lever against the leadership of the old workers' organisations. The Transitional Programme as a whole becomes an indispensable guide in the day to day work of the Fourth International in Europe.

These questions cannot be determined in advance so long as the strategic and tactical orientation of the revolution is [not] correctly envisaged. The concrete slogans will have to be determined by the situation which is posed before the revolutionary party with the development of events.

The slogan of the socialist united states of Europe preserves its character as the basic slogan for the next period ahead to which all the other slogans are linked. The conditions under which Europe has existed for the past few years renders the masses responsive, not [solely] to the posing of day to day issues, but linked up and indissolubly bound up with them, the national and international tasks.

Thus the slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe preserves its vitality as the main axis round which the activity of the proletarian party in Europe must proceed.

## **Soviets and national freedom**

The advance of the Red Army and the importance which Soviet foreign policy has assumed in the life of Europe demand a clear accounting of the role which the Soviet state now plays. On the one hand the basic achievement of October, the state ownership of the means of production, has been maintained and [the] bourgeois “Allies” of the Soviet Union kept at arm’s length, despite all pressure, is demonstrated by the [retention] of the monopoly of foreign trade; on the other hand the increasing internal degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy which has during the course of the war undergone changes which even further separate them from the Soviet masses, increasing their parasitic drain on [the] Soviet economy. In foreign policy they have endeavoured to further the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy which brings clashes with the Allies; on the other hand they stand together with the imperialists as implacably opposed to the socialist revolution in Europe.

The advance of the Red Army into the Balkans, Poland and Central Europe is demonstrating this role. The Soviet bureaucracy is wedded to the European counter-revolution in a democratic disguise. In all the countries they have entered, not one of the social or national problems have been solved in any way. National oppression of the peoples in Europe is to proceed on the same lines – somewhat aggravated by the creation of new national minorities in Europe as in the old pre-war setup. In relation to the problem within the Soviet Union itself, the oppression of the national minorities by the Great Russian bureaucracy, this has assumed a secondary role during the course of the war itself. The masses of the oppressed nationalities in their overwhelming majority, like the workers and peasants of Russia herself, had preferred the lesser evil of the Soviet bureaucracy faced with the alternative of the imperialist oppression. But the problem of the independence of the Ukraine, the Baltic States and other subject nationalities

will pose itself as an urgent problem in the next period. The Bolshevik-Leninists stand for the right to self-determination and independence on the basis of an independent Socialist Soviet Ukraine, etc., if the masses so desire it. But such a struggle in its turn can only be part and parcel of the struggle for the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the restoration of workers' democracy in Russia. This can only be conceived as a struggle for a socialist federation of the peoples of the USSR for a socialist federation of the peoples in Europe.

The Red Army pursues simultaneously a reactionary and a progressive role in Europe: progressive insofar as it reflects the attempt of the bureaucracy to defend the social foundations of the Soviet state; reactionary insofar as the bureaucracy reveals its implacable hostility to the development of the socialist revolution in Europe.

The Stalinist bureaucracy seems intent on training the Red Army for the purpose of suppressing above all the attempt of the German masses to take control in their own hands. Hence the racialistic campaign against the German masses. But the revolutionary outbreaks are inevitable in the next period. In Germany and Europe [this] will inevitably provoke repercussions within the ranks of the Red Army.

The advance of the Red Army in the Balkans has led to a wave of radicalisation and organisation of the proletariat in all the countries they have penetrated. Everywhere the Stalinist parties have become mass organisations immediately. In this way the masses have demonstrated their gravitation towards a socialist solution of their problems. The prestige of the Red Army, which the masses recognise is the force which has had the primary and decisive role in the defeat of the Nazis, and the usurped tradition of the October revolution have played their part in assisting in the mobilisation of the European masses. For the first period it is now clear the Stalinists will play a major role within the ranks of the proletariat and even sections of the petty-bourgeoisie in nearly all the countries of Europe. The sole exception would seem to be Germany. The policy of the Stalinists as quislings of the imperialists will rapidly repel their already shaken

support among the German masses. Within Germany the Fourth International should have the opportunity rapidly to secure a dominant voice within the ranks of the German working class.

Stalinism today represents an even greater danger to the socialist revolution in Europe than even the Social-Democracy did to the German and European movements of the proletariat after the last war. Armed with the resources of the Soviet bureaucracy and the GPU, trading on the lustre of the Soviet victories, they remain a powerful force in disorienting, and systematically disrupting the movement of the proletariat for the benefit of reaction. But the objective development of the situation, the far greater crisis and bankruptcy of capitalism; the experience of the masses in the last 25 years; the weakness of the forces of reaction; the collapse of fascism; the radicalisation of the petty-bourgeoisie all make the reactionary programme of Stalinism extremely difficult to carry out. The bourgeoisie will be compelled to rely on demagoguery rather than direct repression, owing to the stormy impulsion of the masses. Thus Stalinist politics will come into collision with the aspirations of the masses, and provoke permanent and intermittent crises and splits within their ranks.

However, it is not excluded that the Stalinists are capable of a new turn in a "left" direction. As the war nears its close the antagonisms between British and American imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy are coming nearer the surface. Thus, depending on the diplomatic needs of the moment, or the direct pressure of the masses, the Stalinist parties may be involved in new convulsions. This would create exceptionally difficult conditions of work in the first stages for the revolutionary party. A pseudo-left policy would enormously increase the danger to the revolution which is offered by the Stalinist organisations.

The impending uprising against the Nazis or the possible collapse of German imperialism will immediately bring into the foreground the question of fraternisation between the workers and soldiers of the Allies and the German people. Against the foul chauvinism and racialism of the Stalinists and Social-Democrats the Fourth International in Europe will counterpose the fraternal co-

operation of the peoples to achieve the socialist revolution. But inevitably the movement of the masses in Europe, their strikes and uprisings, will have an effect on the British and American soldiers. Despite all prohibitions (and the prohibition reveals the Allied General Staff and the bourgeoisie understand only too well the position with which they will be faced) it will lead to fraternisation and a rapid demoralisation of the troops if any attempt is made to use them for punitive expeditions and repressions. Even a greater effect will be obtained among the rank and file soldiers of the Red Army. Faced with a rebellious proletariat in Europe the psychological grip of the totalitarian bureaucracy will be loosened and tendencies towards fraternisation with the German workers and the European revolution will immediately be evinced.

The development of the revolution in Europe indicates an extended period of Kerenskyism or popular front regimes throughout the continent of Europe. The war will just rise to a new revolutionary wave which will dwarf that of 1917-1921. The basic tendency of the bourgeoisie will be to try and direct this tidal wave of revolution by turning it into the channels of bourgeois democracy. To attempt to meet it in a frontal attack would risk the possibility of greater expense in fruitless and futile attempts to dam the opposition of the masses. It is not excluded, however, that on the general pattern of Popular Front regimes here and there, the bourgeoisie will attempt to keep control by ferocious measures of repression and open dictatorship. But on the general background of European and world unrest generally it would suit the bourgeoisie better to combine the policy of deception with that of reprisals and repressions. Especially as the masses themselves will tend to get completely out of the control of the bourgeoisie. On this background the lessons of the Spanish revolution assume immediate urgency. Stalinism, Social Democracy and centrism will all play their part on the familiar pattern of the Spanish events. But precisely because the situation can and will change abruptly during the course of events it is necessary to guard against all forms of harmful sectarianism and ultra-leftism (which merely repeat Marxist formulas and refuse to use the democratic demands in the transitional stages) while simultaneously participating in the mass movement and guarding against the danger of becoming immersed in opportunism and the temporary relationship of forces.

In the course of the coming events in Europe there will be rapid changes from day to day agitation to revolutionary outbreaks; periods of storm, to be followed by periods of lull, which again will transform themselves into revolutionary upheavals. The instability of the situation and the sharp and abrupt turns should and must be the starting point for the training of the cadres of the Fourth International throughout Europe.

The pressure of the masses on the Stalinist and Social-Democratic organisations will inevitably, in the absence of strong revolutionary parties, tend to provoke splits and the appearance of centrist or left-centrist currents and organisations. In the absence of any authoritative organisations such as the Comintern or even any such authoritative leaders as Lenin and Trotsky, a period of ideological confusion and regroupment in the revolutionary movement seems to be unavoidable. While preserving their ideological intransigence and inflexibility on the question of party programme and principles, an attitude of patient education and systematic explanation will be necessary especially to those groupings which are approaching the Fourth International.

The situation in different countries will pose the problem of course at a different tempo, and in different ways. In some civil war would be precipitated almost immediately after “liberation” or shortly after; in some civil war already broke out in advance before the invaders had been expelled from the country (Greece, Yugoslavia). The situation in France is different from that of Italy; that of Belgium from that of Holland; that of Yugoslavia from that of Hungary.

While conducting their work with the strategic aim of the conquest of power through the proletarian revolution, Bolshevik-Leninists in no way are exempted from the necessity to develop agitation round partial issues for the purpose of mobilising the masses. The extreme weakness of the revolutionary forces dictates that this should form a great part of the day to day work. Even though there were mass parties they could not skip over the necessity of mobilising the masses round the concrete issues with which they are faced. All the more then in the case of weak parties striving to gain the confidence of the masses.



This is the situation in which the revolutionary party will be built. The defeats of the last decades caused by the criminal policies of the reformists, Stalinists and centrists have created exceptionally difficult conditions for the building of the revolutionary party. The stormy events which impend, find not a single strong Bolshevik organisation on the entire continent of Europe. This it is which will give the coming epoch in Europe its stormy character. The impulsion of the masses in storming the citadels of capitalism will attain a new swoop. Cowards and fainthearted on the periphery of the Fourth International have raised the question that it will not be possible to build the revolutionary party in time. All historical experience has shown that without the party it will not be possible to achieve the socialist revolution. Consequently they argue the revolution in Europe will be defeated. Such a point of view is a cowardly capitulation to the bourgeoisie in advance of the battle. The spontaneous movement of the masses, it is true, will not be able to accomplish the overthrow of capitalism without a guiding organisation for the proletariat. But it can and must create the milieu in which the revolutionary party can be built. Separate and apart from the struggle itself it is impossible to build the Fourth International. With correct strategy and tactics on the part of the vanguard, mass parties of the Fourth International can be built in a very few years. Once fused, organised and tested, rooted among the masses they will be the decisive force on the planet.

# **The coming German revolution**

**By Ted Grant**

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## **The German revolution and the future**

The entry of Allied troops into Germany marks the beginning of the end for German imperialism and for the Nazis. The complete collapse of the Hitler regime cannot be long delayed. In four years the swing of the pendulum has brought German imperialism from the attainment of its dream of European domination to the position of imminent dismemberment and powerlessness. There have been few changes in the history of warfare and of the relations between the nations so graphic and so speedy. But in them is reflected the instability of relations between the nations and the social contradictions within the nations themselves.

In 1940, Trotsky wrote commenting on Hitler's victories:

“The political map has been reshaped with equal speed in no other epoch save that of the Napoleonic wars. At that time it was a question of outlived feudal states which had to give way before the bourgeois national state. Today it is a question of outlived bourgeois states which must give way before the socialist federation of the peoples.”[62]

Far from Hitler's defeats refuting, they serve to confirm the idea here expressed. It is the contradictions of world capitalism and the extension of the war to a world, rather than a European arena (which these contradictions made inevitable), which have led to Hitler's undoing on the military field. Moreover, there is a profound significance in the fact that the heart of Hitler's Wehrmacht was torn out on the plains of the Ukraine and the banks of the Volga. In however distorted a form, it was a reflection of the superiority of the coming new society of socialism over decaying capitalism. This in itself is an indication of the decline and decay of the bourgeois system.

But in conquering Europe, and in his attempts to hold it down, Hitler had undermined completely the social basis which capitalism possessed. In so doing, the Nazis have left a legacy to the "victors", a legacy of social storms and convulsions never before attained in the rich history of the old continent which once dominated all others.

In articles reflecting the bourgeois disquiet, the Economist has pointed out that the middle class in France and other occupied countries has been reduced to a fraction of what it was, as the result of the Nazi demand for factory workers, the ruin occasioned by the war, general dislocation, lack of supplies except for war industry, bombing, etc. In the rural areas, though on a smaller scale, the same process has taken place. This, coupled with the tremendous psychological shock occasioned by the events of the war, the collaboration of the bourgeoisie of the defeated countries with the invaders, has undermined the former habitual acceptance of bourgeois domination over the nation. Not alone the working class, but the peasant and petty-bourgeois masses inevitably will seek revolutionary solutions to the unbearable agony to which they have been brought by the capitalist regime. The harsh school, through which they are going, will teach the masses rapidly. All the political trends and tendencies will come up for judgment as to their capacity to deliver the goods.

The crisis of the bourgeois regime is far more profound than it was in 1918. The

shocks involved with the collapse of fascism in Italy are but the shadow of coming events.

## **No stable counter-revolutionary capitalist armies in Europe**

It is a fact which has escaped attention in the working class press, but a factor of profound importance, that in all Europe there is not a single stable bourgeois army, which will be left after the destruction of the German army. A startling fact upon which “revolutionary” pessimists could well ponder! The French army has vanished, and the army assembled at Algiers would hardly fulfil the purpose. The Italian army and those of the Low Countries have been dissolved. Poland’s pitiful émigré army, though selected and organised for the purpose, could hardly fill the bill. In the Balkans, the armies of Greece and Yugoslavia have been smashed and those of Rumania and Bulgaria which have managed formally to retain their form, are already in a shaky condition. If we include the British as a European army, it is composed dominantly of workers whose ranks are so imbued with an anti-capitalist and even socialist consciousness, that it would be impossible to use it for a protracted period for punitive or repressive purposes. Once Hitler has vanished, in the consciousness of this fine proletarian material, the reason for their presence in Europe will have disappeared as well.

There remains of the bourgeois armies, only the extra European forces of American imperialism. Politically they are extremely backward. And it is on this backwardness that world imperialism is relying to save the situation in Europe. But the Achilles’ heel of the American colossus lies in the fact that this mass of soldiery is completely lacking in a cohesive ideology. Most of the American soldiers are indifferent to the propaganda of American imperialism on the aims of the war. Those who are at all politically conscious desire the liquidation of fascism – but all are unanimous in a desire to “go home.” Those who have been affected by the reactionary propaganda, tend to direct their animosity against the Japanese rather than against the Germans. Once Hitler has disappeared, in an atmosphere of universal hostility, the American army too will rapidly become demoralised if used against any section of the European workers. Their desire to

return to the States will become transformed into political opposition to the ruling class.

Meanwhile, the bureaucrats in control of the Red Army are more terrified even than those in control of the imperialist armies at the possibility lodged in a mingling of the Red Army soldiers with the workers and peasants of Germany. They have endeavoured by every means in their power to create a wall of hatred between them. Preparations have been made to use the Red Army to crush completely any tendency in the direction of socialist revolution on the part of the German working class. But immediately the masses in Germany move in the direction of uprising and reprisals against the Nazis and the German ruling class, in Soviet occupied areas, it will have a profound effect on the workers and peasants comprising the Red Army. It will tend to rekindle the flame of the October revolution. Thus as a stable and sure base for capitalist counter revolution and occupation, the Red Army would be even more unstable than any other.

This is the background on which events in Germany will develop – a background of revolutionary disturbances and convulsions throughout Europe.

### **Ideological preparation for Allied repression in Europe**

Inside Germany all the conditions have matured for social explosions. Revolution is inevitable. If it is assumed that the Allies should succeed in occupying Germany before the revolution breaks out, this could only temporarily delay the denouement. Inevitably, an upsurge would develop uniting the mass of the people behind the working class in its struggle for emancipation from social and national enslavement. Taking a leaf out of Hitler's book, the Allies intend imposing a regime on Germany similar to that imposed by the Nazis on France and other countries they have overrun. They can only do this by the use of the same methods of terror, tortures and reprisals by means of which

the Gestapo and the SS maintained their short-lived and precarious occupation of the countries overrun. The Allies will achieve even less success in their endeavours to hold down the population of Germany.

In their endeavour to prepare the way psychologically for their reprisals and executions, as a means of terrorising the masses in Germany into submission, the Allies have in recent weeks begun a sustained campaign of hatred and vilification against the German people as a whole. The myth that the Nazis and the German people are one and the same thing, and that all Germans are by innate nature “Huns”, “war-loving”, “brutal”, “fascist beasts”, “murderers”, etc., without the slightest spark of human decency, is being systematically propagated. The undoubted atrocities which the depraved elements of the SS and the Nazis have perpetrated against the peoples of Europe, serve as the ostensible excuse for the legend that the whole of the German nation is responsible. It is conveniently forgotten by the gentry manufacturing this hatred, that the SS learned its sadism in action against the worker-socialists, communists and trade unionists in Germany itself. And that this savagery had begun even prior to Hitler’s coming to power. They wish the masses to overlook the delight with which they regarded Hitler’s oppression of the German masses, and the approval with which it was regarded by the democratic statesmen, as a safeguard against socialist revolution. But in both cases they are remaining true to their aims. Behind the support for Hitler, as behind the attack on the German masses as “poisoned Hitlerites”, lies the same class motive: fear of the socialist revolution.

From a somewhat similar angle can be explained the rabid chauvinism and race hatred preached by the Kremlin. The co-operation with Hitler in the Stalin-Hitler pact, and now the frenzied and insane denunciation of everything German, in reality present the same symmetrical pattern: fear of the socialist revolution in Germany and its threat to the power and privileges of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

On this question all the forces of the old society are united. Though of course, they intend to utilise the position to squeeze all they can out of the German masses in their own interests.

## **The German people under the Nazis**

Hitler, having come to power, crushed the working class with the aid of the middle class, then speedily turned on the deluded petty bourgeois. That was the significance of the June 30th purge of 1934. Having duped the middle class with demagogic phrases and propaganda against the combines, the Nazi dictatorship revealed itself as the ferocious agent of finance capital. If the middle class had been ruined in the “democratic” Weimar republic this was as nothing to the state to which they were reduced under the Nazis; crippling taxation and the wiping out of large sections of the middle class as a social grouping were speeded up beyond anything which had obtained in pre-Nazi Germany.

Incapable of solving the crisis of German capitalism the bloated Nazi bureaucracy had no course other than war. Nazism was revealed as the “chemically distilled essence of the pure culture of imperialism”. But on this road, weakened German capitalism could only travel by forcing the masses to tighten their belts even further. “Guns before butter” was the grim programme of the Nazis before the present war began.

In the six years between the Nazis coming to power and the invasion of Poland, the mass basis of the Nazis had largely disappeared. The mass of the working class never supported them. The middle class had become disillusioned. The victories of 1939-40 may have resulted in a temporary wave of chauvinism, but this was rapidly dissipated by the horrors of the war against the Soviet Union. One thing alone has paralysed the German masses from taking action against the hated regime, and that has been the fear of the consequences of Allied victory.

Neither in the East from the side of Stalin, nor in the West from the Allies, has any attractive alternative been offered to them. Indeed, the threats emanating

from the Soviet Union have been even more frightening to the masses than from the Allied imperialists. Thus, Stalin has presented Goebbels with the “secret weapon” by means of which “national unity” in the Reich has been maintained.

But a “national unity” founded on fear of the consequences of defeat, and backed with the terror of the SS and the Gestapo, cannot be maintained indefinitely in the face of the mounting catastrophes suffered by the Nazi regime. The disintegration of the Nazi Reich proceeds apace. Germany is now almost the last of the Nazi-occupied countries. The tens and thousands of arrests of anyone who could be remotely suspected of opposition and dangerous thoughts towards the regime, are an indication of this. More and more, as the masses become bitter and resentful, the Nazis are like conquerors in a foreign land. The newspapers report of Hamburg – Red Hamburg – that large numbers of the SS men have been found either knifed, or with their heads battered in – but with their weapons stolen. It is reported that SS and Gestapo men dare not move about in the large industrial cities of Germany at night singly – but go in pairs and groups – so many have been found dead, their fire-arms missing. Instructive episodes! They mirror the intensity of the hatred towards the regime – which surely must be the greatest in history – and the thirst for revenge on the part of the German masses.

All the conditions for revolutionary upheaval are now present. It but requires some accident which will set the workers of one large industrial city in Germany into open collision with the Nazis, and all Germany will be plunged into the revolution. It is similar to the situation in Italy before the fall of Mussolini, except that in Germany the masses are fearful of the Allies. If they gain the opportunity of marching [the] German revolution must burst forth in a far more gigantic explosion than in the Italian peninsula.

### **Splits in the German ruling class**

The knowledge of the inevitability of defeat, and the pressure of the masses from



below, has already led the German bourgeoisie to attempt to rid themselves of the mascot Hitler, now transformed into a millstone around their necks. This in itself, is a symptom of the revolutionary crisis in Germany. As always, in history, the coming of the revolution is marked by irreparable fissures and antagonisms opening out within the ranks of the ruling class itself.

Under an open dictatorship, this always manifests itself in plots and conspiracies. The generals' revolt, and the reports which indicate an Allied, or even entirely separate conspiracy on the part of certain groupings of industrialists, were manifestations of this process in Germany. But neither the generals nor the industrialists were completely united on the need or the time to rid themselves of the Nazis. The same cause which propelled a desperate section forward momentarily paralysed and terrified other sections. Their attention was rivetted on events in Italy where the removal of Mussolini provoked instead of forestalling the revolutionary storm. The freshness of these events and the undercurrent of social antagonisms now rising openly to the surface, convinced them that the removal of Hitler if anything would provoke even worse consequences for their class.

Moreover, Hitler and his group of human scum, thugs and adventurers, had no intention of retiring from the scene to suit their paymasters, who no longer had any use for them. They did not intend to be cast aside, like the bourgeoisie toss away their worn-out mistresses. They too had observed the events in Italy and attempted to profit by the lesson. This hooligan gang had nothing to gain and would lose all by such a change – including also their lives. They had no particular regard for “Germany”, whether bourgeois or any other Germany, except from the point of view of milking her. These gangsters have sown such a harvest of hatred and scorn that there is no way out for them – they act with the desperation of cornered rats. And the German bourgeoisie which only yesterday had luscious visions of exploiting all Europe, finds itself incapable of asserting immediate control on Germany – the forces they have raised from the depths of society have expropriated them politically, and attempt to act as an independent force threatening even the members of the bourgeoisie itself.

Thus it is revealed that in the dialectics of class rule the pattern is not at all simple, but extremely complex.

### **Allied plans after Hitler's fall**

However, measures of terror cannot save Hitler. Even if by some miracle the Nazis could stave off military defeat for a time (and this is not entirely excluded by the relationship of forces), the inevitable collapse of the regime from internal explosions is drawing near. The desperation of the regime is but a reflection of the desperation of the masses. Firing squads, arrests, terror, concentration camps are all useless for a regime which has completely outlived itself. There is not a live thread in the whole structure left. Even the SS and the Gestapo have no faith in the future, and large numbers are seeking for a way to save themselves. In addition to which the war has compelled the breaking down of the SS, which is no longer a carefully selected instrument of suppression, but has been diluted with large numbers of fresh elements and even foreign mercenaries with an entirely different training and outlook to the old members. Even these latter cannot remain unaffected by the prevailing mood among the bulk of the population in Germany. Hitlerism is in its death agony. The piling up of contradictions has reached such a degree of intensity that it has gone far beyond the limits which any society can bear.

What will be the exact course of developments, it would be impossible to predict. All that can be laid down is the general course of events that will ensue. One of the factors which dictates the pathological campaign against the Germans by the Stalinists and the bourgeoisie, is their fear of the tradition of the German workers. Numerically the strongest sector of the European proletariat, the German workers have a tradition of education in the ideas of Marxism which extends back for more than two generations. Under the influence of the crisis, these ideas must inevitably be revived with tenfold strength, especially within the vanguard, now that the masses have gone through the hell of fascism. Hitler has drained the social reserves of German capitalism. The middle class – whittled down to a shadow of what it was before Hitler, or even before the war –

can no longer provide a stable basis for reaction. On the contrary, the pendulum must inevitably swing in the opposite direction. The middle class, which drew behind it sections of the backward workers in its period of counter-revolutionary frenzy, will follow the lead of the workers in a new revolutionary upsurge.

If in France, Italy and other countries, the workers have immediately taken to the road of mass expropriations, and arrests of the employers; if there is the tendency to the setting up of soviets and workers' committees; if the workers immediately begin to seize factories and to arm themselves in order to make themselves master of the situation once the pressure of the Nazi military machine was released – what will the position be in Germany? Inevitably in a situation of chaos and ruin, the masses will be impelled to settle accounts with the Nazis in the most ruthless fashion. Almost automatically on the morrow of a successful uprising against Hitler, the workers', soldiers' and peasants' committees would be compelled to attempt to assert control of Germany: the socialist revolution would pose itself as the sole solution.

An uprising on these lines has already been envisaged in the calculations of Anglo-American imperialism. Churchill's statement in parliament that, the "Germans" could not escape responsibility for their crimes by turning to communism was a warning in advance of the repression of the Allies in that event. But the consequences for Europe and the world of such a movement, would slip beyond the control of the imperialists. Revolutionary convulsions as far away as Asia and Africa would be felt among the already restless colonial slaves of the imperialists.

Accepting the worst variant in developments in the immediate future – that Hitler could succeed in holding down the population till the Allies march in and occupy the whole of Germany, and that the fall of Nazism takes place through its military debacles – what follows would be a different pattern to the one sketched above certainly! But how different? From the Nazis oppressing the German workers, the German workers would become oppressed not only socially but nationally as well, by the foreign conquerors.

And what can the bourgeoisie of Germany, or the Allies, offer any section of the German population? Under present conditions, the Allies as well as the German bourgeoisie regard the existence of a democratic regime as dangerous, because it could not be long lasting. Hence the programme of the German bourgeoisie cannot but be, to accept the position of a satellite of Anglo-American imperialism – of quislings.

The Allies intend to place themselves in the position formerly occupied by the Nazis, but hope to retain the present political relationships intact. Everything is to remain unchanged! With or without the Allies, the Nazi Party would disappear – its existence would extremely embarrass the Allies at home. They still have to maintain the pretence of a war to exterminate fascism and too open a revelation of their aims would provoke repercussions among their own working class. Consequently, a few hundreds of the Nazi tops would have to be removed as a gesture to satisfy the “mob”. But as for the rest, the Nazi bureaucracy and the capitalists would remain as subordinate partners of the imperialists. The system of repression established by Hitler – except the racial discrimination against the Jews, the abolition of which would not cost the Allies anything, and would be an inexpensive gesture – would remain in operation with additional “improvements” such as the curfew. The pariah race would now be the Germans. That is the pattern of occupation as established by the military regulations on the first strip of territory in Germany, occupied by the Allies.

The bourgeoisie have noted with dread the experience of fascism in Europe, but are unable to profit thereby. Hitler’s rule, as that of Mussolini, depended on a number of factors, all of which have disappeared today. No regime can last without mass backing. This backing was given in the first period of the rule of fascism by the deluded middle class. Once they had become disillusioned it was only the inertia, apathy, and disappointment of the masses in the failure and incapacity of their own organisations, which prevented the dictators’ overthrow. With the masses aroused by the events of the war, Mussolini was doomed, as is Hitler. Hitler endeavoured, by military force, to replace the shattered ranks of Mussolini’s militia. He has found in North Italy that once overthrown, it was

impossible to reinstate the fascists, though they tried hard enough. A totalitarian oppression is bad enough. A foreign totalitarian repression is unbearable!

But the Allied capitalist statesmen realise this only too well. They are expecting as desperate a resistance as the Nazis received in the lands they conquered. Hence there is a clear and cool calculation in the campaign pushed forward in the bourgeois press of Britain and America that the Nazis, expecting inevitable defeat, are preparing to go “underground”. The idea in itself does not bear examination. No more than in the case of Mussolini, could Hitler with what little support he still possesses, survive the military debacle.

But the thoroughly roused German masses who have had to put up with unbearable repression, would not for long tolerate the repression of the Allies, especially as they witness the Allied fraternization with and protection of, the Nazi bureaucrats and capitalists. They would inevitably resist in the most desperate fashion the Allied oppression and exploitation. In order to kill any sympathy or support for such movements of opposition among the workers in the Allied countries the Allied command are preparing to use Stalin’s technique and label every such uprising, strike, protest or demonstration, as “underground Nazi” or “Nazi inspired”. Hence, their terror and fear of fraternization between the German workers and Allied armies; hence their adoption of the same technique as Hitler (who in turn had learned it from the repression of the imperialists in the colonies in the occupied territories). The destruction of the little town of Wallendorf had the same deliberate aim as the destruction of Lidice and other towns by the Nazis[63]: to terrorise the population and create a gulf between them and the Allied soldiers. But all such efforts in the long run will break down, on the disgust of the Allied soldiers at being used for such reprisals and punishments.

**Prepare for the socialist revolution**

Meanwhile, in Germany itself under the claws of the Nazis a new generation of revolutionaries is being fashioned. A generation hard and unbreakable, tested and steeled in the fire of Nazi repression. The Allied ruling class directs its propaganda against the German youth. With good reason! Not at all because it is “corrupted” by the teachings of Nazism, but because of its striving towards revolutionary change. Again the example of Italy indicates how easily youth, which feels the burden of fascist repression and stifling of all initiative and independence, more than any other section of the population, assimilates rapidly revolutionary ideas and methods at the first opportunity. The reports which have trickled through show the strong opposition in Germany against Hitlerism even now among the youth. The working class and even the middle class student youth and schoolboys have provided groups of recruits to the anti-Nazi organisations.

For many reasons it is likely that the old workers’ organizations, which so ignobly surrendered to Hitler, may not gain so firm a support even in the early stages of the revolution in Germany as in the other countries in Europe. Any attempt to co-operate with the Allied conquerors would immediately label them as traitors in the eyes of the masses. The Stalinist programme of Vansittartite repressions and reparations would speedily lose these gentry any support they might muster in Germany. From the ranks of the German workers will come some of the finest fighters for the socialist revolution. In Germany what groups of socialists, communists and worker oppositionists existed and developed have been compelled to weigh up the situation and give a lead independently of the bureaucrats of Stalinism and the social democrats, by the very conditions of the unparalleled Nazi terror. In the factories the best militants have learned to appraise the situation carefully and thoroughly. Upon these revolutionary fighters, it will not be so easy to impose the policy of class collaboration. The thoughts of the German workers are bitter and they have been coloured by the excesses of the Nazis. Every worker must have cast longing glances at the lamp-posts when faced with some particularly irksome tyranny on the part of the Nazis or his bosses – he does not make much distinction between his employer or factory “fuhrer” and the Nazi regime.

But the fate of Germany obviously cannot be separated from the fate of Europe.

The millions of foreign slaves that Hitler imported into Germany will play an important role in this respect. They have established secret and friendly relations with the German workers despite the strict Nazi prohibition against this. They will take back memories of the German workers' opposition to the regime and their fraternal class solidarity when they return to the countries from whence they came. The problem of the German revolution cannot be separated from the problem of the revolution in all Europe. The war has tied the fate of all the European countries together. Events in one will have immediate repercussions in all the others.

In this connection the events in Bulgaria when the Red Army marched in, mirror in miniature the possibilities lodged in the situation in the whole of Europe. Despite all, when the Red Army marched into Sofia the class not the national or racial instincts immediately exerted their supremacy. According to the report published in the News Chronicle (significantly the only paper which carried the news in Britain and even more significantly only in the early editions, as it was suppressed in the later issues) the Red Army soldiers were fraternising with the civilian population, with the Bulgarian army and with the German soldiers! One ecstatic mass exchanging the Red Front salute!

As the British correspondent who witnessed these events, ingeniously remarked, the Communist Party could have taken power without any possibility of opposition but did not seem to want to do so! What an historical crime has been committed by the perfidious role of Stalinism!

However, the task is not to meditate on the role of Stalinism and reformism but to prepare actively to combat them. The military battles in Europe are drawing to a close the era of class battle will replace it.

If the revolutionary communists of Germany together with the Fourth International everywhere, can succeed in finding their way to the masses and building strong revolutionary parties, it is they who will determine the future –

that of the socialist united states of Europe.



# Why Hitler came to power

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6, No. 9, December 1944][64]

The imminent defeat of Hitler raises many questions as to the past and future of Germany. According to the reports at the Quebec conference[65], What to do with Germany once she has been defeated has loomed large as the problem which is worrying the spokesmen of Anglo-American imperialism. They consider this to be as grave and thorny a problem as the destruction of German imperialist power itself. Their fears as to the possibility of maintaining control of Germany by means of Allied armies of occupation has led the imperialists to launch a virulent hate campaign. Now at the head of the gang, spewing forth the foul doctrines of racialism and nationalism, of indiscriminate hatred of the Germans as a nation, thus emulating the worst features of the racial doctrine of the Nazis, stands the so-called Communist Party leadership. In the rear, but more cautiously, for fear of their own membership, the Labour leaders, faithfully echo the Vansittart[66] teaching of their imperialist master.

But the fate of Germany today, as it has been for many decades, remains a key question for the fate of Europe. The reason for the insistence of the ruling class and of Stalin on the formula of unconditional surrender, lies in their fear of the socialist revolution which is rapidly maturing within Germany. Once the heavy hand of the Gestapo and the SS has been removed there will be no organised force capable of maintaining the repression of the German masses. During the rule of Hitler, monstrous crimes and repressions on the part of the Nazis have engendered a hatred which has few parallels in history. An enormous explosion is being prepared which threatens not only to blow the Nazi Party to smithereens

but threatens the whole of the capitalist system itself. Every worker in Germany knows that it is the combines, monopolies, trusts and big capitalists who organised Hitler and placed him in control. As Rauschning[67], the ex-nationalist, ex-Nazi Gauleiter of Danzig has pointed out, the expropriation of the Jews leads inevitably to the posing of the problem of expropriation of all the capitalists. It is not for nothing that Hitler has attempted to give his demagogy a “socialist” coloration. This reflects the aspirations not alone of the German workers but the overwhelming majority of the German population as a whole. In the past few decades all the forms of capitalist exploitation and political rule have been tried and found wanting. Inevitably the socialist revolution will be automatically posed with the fall of Hitler.

But this is precisely what the ruling class of Britain and America and the traitors in the Kremlin fear more than anything else. The spectre of a German revolution – of a new and this time completed 1918 – is their main preoccupation now that German militarism is in its death throes.

The instinct of the working class in the Allied countries is, while maintaining implacable hatred for fascism, to distinguish between the fascist thugs and the ordinary German worker. Profiting from their experience after the last world war when all the armies of occupation fraternised with the German masses (who easily convinced them that they were no different from themselves) the ruling class are attempting to place barriers in the way of its reoccurrence. The army staffs of both Britain and America have backed up the ideological campaign of chauvinist incitement by strict orders threatening punishment to any soldiers fraternising with German civilians.

The attitude of the British and American workers to the German workers can decide the fate of the coming German revolution and in so doing, will also decide whether there is to be a new version of fascism and imperialist World War Three. Under these conditions the necessity to enlighten the British masses as to the history and meaning of German events, at least since the last world war, becomes doubly important. It becomes necessary to restate the most elementary

propositions of Marxism. Today, those traitors who point the finger of scorn at the German workers pretend that it is the fault of the German workers that Hitler came to power. They attempt to evade their own historic responsibility for this catastrophe. In commenting on the murder of Thaelmann[68] the Daily Worker cynically says that he fought for the united front in Germany with all other working class organisations in order to destroy fascism. That is why it is all the more necessary to explain to the British and other workers exactly what did take place. The new generation, in particular, must understand the part Stalinism played in German events prior to Hitler's seizure of power, if they wish to understand its present role.

Thälmann has been murdered by the Nazis together with tens of thousands of other victims of the fascist barbarians. But it is necessary to speak the truth if there are to be no more victims of the system which produced Hitler. Now the Stalinists wish to use Thaelmann's martyrdom as a cover for their crimes against the German people. All the more necessary then, to show the role that Stalinism played in the rise of Hitler.

The truth of the matter is that the Stalinists devoted the major part of their energy to ridiculing the danger of the Nazis and concentrated their whole attention on fighting the social democrats as the "main enemy". They fought viciously against Trotsky's suggestion that the united front was the only means of smashing Hitler and preparing the way for the victory of the working class. From the lips of Thälmann himself we get the following:

"Trotsky wants in all seriousness a common action of the communists with the murderer of Liebknecht and Rosa [Luxemburg], and more, with Mr Zoergiebel[69] and those police chiefs whom the Papen regime leaves in office to oppress the workers. Trotsky has attempted several times in his writings to turn aside the working class by demanding negotiations between the chiefs of the German Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party." (Thaelmann's closing speech at the 12th Plenum, September 1932, Executive Committee of the Communist International, Communist International, No 17-18, page 1329)

The Stalinists went even further, openly inciting the communist workers to beat up socialist workers, break up their meetings, etc., even carrying the fight to the school children in the very playgrounds! Thälmann even put forward openly the slogan: “Chase the social fascists from their jobs in the plants and the trade unions.” Following on this line of the leader, the Young Communist organ The Young Guard propounded the slogan: “Chase the social fascists from the plants, the employment exchanges, and the apprentice schools.”

But the line has to be carried through to the end. In the organ of the Young Pioneers which catered for the communist children, the Drum, the “unifying” slogan is put forward: “Strike the little Zoergiebels in the schools and the playgrounds.”

### **Thälmann denounced the united front**

Thälmann indignantly repudiated the very thought of a united front with the Social Democratic Party. In an article published in Die Internationale, November-December 1931, page 488:

“It [the Social Democratic Party] threatens to make a united front with the Communist Party. The speech of Breitscheid[70] [whose murder was announced at the same time as Thaelmann’s – EG] at Darmstadt on the occasion of the Hesse elections and the comments of Vorwaerts on this speech show that social democracy by his manoeuvre is drawing on the wall the devil of Hitler’s fascism and is holding back the masses from the real struggle against the dictatorship of finance capital. And these lying mouthfuls... they hope to make them more palatable with the sauce of a so-called friendship for the communists [against the prohibition of the German CP – EG] and to make them more agreeable to the masses.”

And again in a vehement attack on Trotsky:

“In his pamphlet on the question, How will National Socialism be defeated?, Trotsky gives always but one reply: ‘The German CP must make a bloc with the Social Democracy...’ In framing this bloc, Trotsky sees the only way for completely saving the German working class against fascism. Either the CP will make a bloc with the social democracy or the German working class is lost for 10-20 years.

“This is the theory of a completely ruined fascist and counter-revolutionary. This theory is the worst theory, the most dangerous theory and the most criminal that Trotsky has constructed in the last years of his counter-revolutionary propaganda.” (Thaelmann, closing speech at the 12th Plenum, September 1932)

But it is not necessary to deal with the dupe. The fount head of this criminal policy was Joseph Stalin. He even put forward the nonsensical theory that the Socialist Party and the fascists were one and the same thing:

“Fascism, said Stalin, is the fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie, which rests upon the active support of the social democracy. Objectively, the social democracy is the moderate wing of fascism. There is no reason to admit that the fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie could obtain decisive successes either in the struggles or in the government of the country without the active support of the social democracy... There is also little reason to admit that social democracy can obtain decisive successes either in struggles or in the government of the country without the active support of the fighting organisation of the bourgeoisie. These organisations are not mutually exclusive, but on the contrary are mutually complementary. They are not antipodes but twins. Fascism is a shapeless bloc of these two organisations. Without this bloc the bourgeoisie could not remain at the helm.” (Stalin, quoted in Die Internationale, February

1932)

In carrying out this theory the wise Manuilsky[71] had explained at the 11th Plenum of the Communist International [of] April 1931:

“The social democrats, in order to deceive the masses, deliberately proclaim that the chief enemy of the working class is fascism... Is it not true that the whole theory of the ‘lesser evil’ rests on the presupposition that fascism of the Hitler type represents the chief enemy?” (D. Z. Manuilsky, *The communist parties and the crisis of capitalism*, London, 1931, page 112)

It was with this revision of all the teachings of Lenin that the Communist Party of Germany, with the assistance of the Social Democracy, confused and paralysed the workers and then handed them over without a battle into the hands of the fascist executioner.

The British hypocrites who now slander the German workers applauded this policy of betrayal at the time when the revolutionary socialists were raising their voice all over the world in an effort to prevent the tragedy which was impending in Germany. “It is significant”, jeered the *Daily Worker* of May 26 1932, “that Trotsky has come out in defence of a united front between the Communist and Social Democratic Parties against fascism. No more disruptive and counter revolutionary class lead could possibly have been given at a time like the present.”

At the eleventh hour, just before Hitler’s coming to power, Ralph Fox wrote in the *Communist Review* of December 1932:

“The Communist Party of Germany has now succeeded in winning the majority of the working class in the decisive industrial areas, where it is now the first party in Germany. The only exceptions are Hamburg and Saxony, but even here the party vote has enormously increased at the expense of the Social Democrats.

“These successes have been won only by the most unswerving carrying through of the line of the party and the Comintern. Insisting all the time that Social Democracy is the chief social support of capitalism, the party has carried on intense and unceasing struggle against the German Social Democratic Party, and the new ‘Independent Socialist Labour Party’, as well as against the right wing and Trotskyist renegades who wanted the party of the proletariat to make a united front with social fascism against fascism.”

It is this suicidal policy of Stalinism against which Trotsky and the International Left Opposition waged a struggle in the critical years 1930-3 when the fate of Germany hung in the balance. Trotsky’s works on Germany will remain forever as textbooks on the problem of the united front. They will serve as models for the revolutionary movement of the future. That we commence publication of Trotsky’s material on this question in England for the first time, is a reflection on the revolutionary movement in Britain. Every student who desires an understanding of the degeneration of Stalinism will study this material with great care.

Even though Germany – The key to the international situation was written in 1931, it retains its freshness at the present time. The outline of the situation, not only in Germany, but in the other countries dealt with, indicates clearly Trotsky’s profound understanding of the political process of development of our period. Trotsky and the Fourth International alone warned of the catastrophe that the coming to power of Hitler would mean for the workers of Germany, Europe and of the Soviet Union. When the Stalinists refused to learn the lesson of events, and in a most cowardly way, surrendered the German masses to Hitler without a fight, or even a shot being fired; when they even went so far as to proclaim the coming to power of Hitler as a victory for the working class – as it expressed the

crisis of capitalism and his victory was merely that of the caliph of an hour, boastfully proclaiming “our turn next” – it was then that Trotsky proclaimed the end of the Comintern as a force making for world socialism.

How pitiful, how despicable are the writings of the pen prostitutes of the Kremlin on Germany, when the real historical events are analysed. These Dutts, these Rusts, these Ehrenburgs[72], not satisfied with having betrayed the German workers into the hands of the Nazis, now systematically disseminate chauvinist poison to the Allied workers in order to assist Anglo-American imperialism to enslave the German people. Having proved incapable of leading the German workers to victory, they now actively oppose the socialist revolution in Germany. Thus as always in politics, ineptness and stupidity, if not corrected, become transformed into treachery.

The German and British workers will yet present their accounts not only to their imperialist oppressors but to their hirelings in the ranks of the working class. Once the working class realises the full depth of their treachery, like the traducers of the Commune, they will forever be held to scorn in the memory of the working class.

It would have been impossible to conceive that elements claiming to represent the working class should stoop to such depths as the Stalinists. From the social democrats nothing more could have been expected – they remained faithful to their past tradition of reformist betrayal. The Stalinists have often enough in the past referred to the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg and the betrayal of the revolution of 1918. But nothing in their record could equal the long list of crimes marked up to the account of Stalinism.

Surely, all the gods must have laughed at the spectacle of the Stalinist leaders solemnly intoning that it was necessary to “re-educate” the German workers – and their educators? Allied imperialism and Stalinism! Yes, re-education is necessary! Re-education of the ranks of the working class as to the role of the



leadership of the organisations claiming to represent them. Re-education which will assist them to burn out the cancer of Stalinism and reformism which will lead the workers only to further catastrophe. In order to accomplish the task of “educating” not only the German but the British and world workers, it is necessary that the advanced guard should be trained and armed with a knowledge of the Marxist method and of the history of past defeats. As an indispensable means of understanding the position in Germany today, it is necessary for the workers to conscientiously study the works of Trotsky. Germany is still the key to the international situation – with an understanding and with a knowledge of the past and future tasks we will go forward to the building of a new socialist world.

# **Indian troops join ELAS**

## **Military dictator placed in power**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 10, January 1945]

Churchill has been compelled to make fake “concessions” to the mass movement of the Greek people. This adventurer thought he could crush the Greek workers and peasants in a matter of days. But he had neither reckoned with the heroic resistance of the Greek masses in their fight to gain the right to choose their own government, nor had he reckoned with the resentment of the British soldiers and workers at having to play the role of SS in “liberated” Europe.

One of the main factors dictating Churchill’s gesture was the wave of resentment caused in this country and among the British troops in Greece. Lord Farringdon declared openly in the House of Lords that this expedition would provoke the danger of mutiny among the British troops.

The British capitalists thought they could rely on reactionary Polish forces, colonial troops, and “especially trained” paratroopers for this dirty job. When additional troops were flown to Italy, they were deceived that they were being sent to fight against Germans, and a German uprising aided by a section of the Greeks. This was made more plausible by the fact that many of the ELAS soldiery have German uniforms and equipment which have been captured from

the Germans. But their indignation was great when they were captured by ELAS and the truth was revealed.

The British troops in Greece could not be deceived for an extended period of time. Already a section of the Ghurkas, reputedly the most backward of Indian troops, have deserted to ELAS.

The Observer on December 17th, openly declared:

“...the price of such a victory (over ELAS) would be high, not only in casualties but in its repercussions at home and abroad. It could probably not be achieved without serious Labour trouble in this county. It might break the coalition...”

These factors have compelled the imperialists to look to other methods of crushing the movement of Greek workers and peasants. They are forced to rely on a new regroupment of puppets who will be in a better position than Papandreou and the King to control the masses.

The London Times, most sober and serious organ of big business openly revealed that support for the so-called Papandreou government was a myth.

“The grimmest fact about the whole situation, and the one which dominates everything else, is that fighting is still going on, not for the most part between Greeks and Greeks, but between British and Greeks...”

The forces of General Zervas whom British imperialism lavishly supplied with

arms, uniforms, money and equipment, have melted to nothing as soon as the trial of strength was shown. From reports carefully censored, it is apparent that almost half, if not the majority immediately went over to ELAS when an actual clash occurred rather than allow themselves to become tools of the fascists and imperialists against the Greek people. Out of his boasted army of 15,000 to 18,000, the last remnants of 1,000 have been ignominiously evacuated by the British navy. British bayonets are the sole prop on which the royalists and fascists can rely.

The Conference in Athens which was supposed to settle matters “between the Greeks themselves” was so much hypocrisy. If the British troops were withdrawn from Greece, ELAS would be the master of Athens not in days but within hours. It was a conference between the puppets of Britain and ELAS.

The nature of the so-called “representative government” which Churchill was backing with arms and food was exposed by the delegates who represented it at this conference. Rallis was one of them. This man organised the armed quisling thugs and murderers of the so-called “Security Battalions” for the Nazis in order to terrorise and carry out punitive expeditions during the Nazi occupation of Greece. He was declared a “war criminal” who, because of the hatred of the masses, even the Papandreou government was forced to place behind bars as a traitor. He barely escaped with his life when ELAS stormed the gaols, and the workers and soldiers proceeded to execute the quislings on the spot so that they would not come under the protection of the British. He was rescued during the struggle by the British troops.

As a provocation and an insult to the Greek masses, Rallis turns up as a delegate to the so-called “peace” conference.

But the Papandreou government which Churchill described as so representative and which he tried so desperately to save, has disappeared.

Regent has been set up and new negotiations have commenced. It is possible that a deal will be made with ELAS and EAM. As the Times has suggested, a government similar to that of de Gaulle should be established. The whole policy of the Stalinist leadership of ELAS is based on the idea of a compromise with British imperialism. ELAS is asking for the disarmament of all the Greek forces – which leaves the control in the hands of British imperialism. This is the road of defeat and disaster. Power is in the hands of the worker and peasants of Greece, if they were conscious enough to grasp it; if the Stalinist party was a Leninist party pursuing the policy of the seizure of power by the working class, we would have a Soviet Greece which would inflame the Balkans.

But the Stalinist bureaucracy has betrayed the Greek masses. Not only have they refused aid which they could easily have rendered since they are on the borders of Bulgaria, they have maintained a treacherous silence, thus serving the interests of the reactionaries. In return for Churchill's support in Poland, Stalin is prepared to support British reaction in Greece.

ELAS has been temporising. Instead of openly appealing to the workers of the world, and above all to the British workers, explaining the real aims of Churchill and the ruling class, they have toadied in their public statements to the British ruling class and Churchill. While not putting forward any socialist demands, they have appealed not for a government of the EAM which represents 90 percent of the population, but only for half and less of the seats in a new government.

They demanded Damaskinos as regent, who when appointed promptly handed over the government to General Plastiras, a notorious reactionary who has sworn enmity to EAM and said he would leave Greece if their demands were granted. His claim to represent the new Greek "democracy" is that he has twice been a military dictator in Greece!

The last time for one day, after which he had to flee the country. So much for trust in Damaskinos and other “impartial” representatives of the capitalist class.

A compromise may be reached. ELAS has been trying to find a formula for capitulation all the time, But they fear the masses who might take things into their own hands. Already, before the conflict had begun, the Greek masses were in a revolutionary mood. Long before the war the Trotskyist Party had big support among the Greek workers and peasants. The Economist of August 5 1944, wrote:

“It is interesting to note that a Russian military mission has now arrived in the Greek mountains. A report from Cairo says that its ‘most probable objective is to draw into line the recalcitrant communists who now rule the EAM detachments.

“Whether this is really so cannot yet be ascertained, though it is known that M. Papandreou has had some support in the Middle East from Soviet representatives. ‘Recalcitrant Communism’ used to be pretty strong in Greece some years ago. Its spokesmen, who labelled themselves curiously as ‘Archivo-Marxists’, gave many headaches to the leaders of the Communist International in Moscow. Under the Mexatas regime the ‘Archivo-Marxists’ were wiped out by police repression; and it seems somewhat doubtful whether the same movement has now been able to re-emerge and to sway the Greek guerillas. But it is quite possible that some such unorthodox communist tendency may have established itself among the ‘men of the mountains’ firmly enough to oppose the Lebanon Agreement and to reject any conciliation with the dynasty. If so then the Russian military mission in Greece will be confronted with a task which may be as much political [as] military.

“The Mission has come to Greece with an increased ‘moral and political prestige derived from the victories of Russian armies. This will probably strengthen its hands in laying the ‘Trotskyist’ ghost in the Epirus.”

Although no news has come through the censorship, a report appeared in the provincial editions of the British press, which was suppressed in the later editions of the national press, that [out of] three prisoners interviewed by British journalists, two stated that they were social democrats, and one that he was a member of the Fourth International.

Our Greek comrades will be fighting for a revolutionary socialist policy as the only means of achieving victory for the working class.

### **Our tasks in Britain**

News from reliable sources indicates that Churchill was compelled to undertake the manoeuvre of his Christmas flight to Greece because the Labour ministers had told him that their position was becoming untenable in face of the overwhelming protests they had received from the organised Labour movement throughout the country. They said that unless the policy was modified, in view of the rising wave of protest, they would have no alternative but to leave the government. But Churchill has not changed. He remains, as before, the implacable enemy of the workers.

This shameful behind the scenes negotiations with Churchill and the reactionary imperialists by the Labour leaders must be ended. The pressure of the workers has already rocked the coalition. A mighty movement to end the coalition would compel the Labour ministers to leave the government and stay Churchill's claws from seizing the Greek workers by the throat.

*Workers! Demand the withdrawal of the British troops from Greece! End the coalition! For a socialist Greece and a socialist Britain!*

# **British Labour betrayed Greek workers**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 12, Mid-February 1945]

Churchill's speech on Greece was a clear indication of the fears and of the aims of the British ruling class: it was a declaration of war against socialism and the socialist revolution in Europe.

“For three or four days, or more, it was a struggle to prevent a hideous massacre in the centre of Athens, in which all forms of government would have been swept away and naked triumphant Trotskyism installed.”

“I think ‘Trotskyists’ is a better definition of the Greek Communists and of certain other sects than the normal word, and it has the advantage of being equally hated in Russia. (Laughter and cheers).”

Thus Churchill openly signifies whom he regards as the enemy: the socialist revolution, which he correctly characterises as “Trotskyism”. The despicable lies and slanders of Stalinism are brushed aside by this arch-enemy of socialism and the working class. In giving an account of his stewardship, Churchill has attempted to justify his policy of brute force by showing the dangers to his class that existed in the situation in Greece. Of course he did not say that the general strike and uprising of the overwhelming majority of the workers and large sections of the middle class in Athens, was provoked by the police firing on



unarmed men, women and children. Nor does he say that the Greek workers had many bitter memories of the fascist police who were used as a tool of repression by fascist dictator Metaxas and then sold their services to Hitler.

Against “Trotskyism”, against the socialist revolution, against any attempt of the workers to take control of society into their hands in any country, Churchill and the ruling class will use any means, including the devil and the Nazi gang itself.

Not for nothing did Churchill, in his first speech on Greece, justify his support of Mussolini against the danger of Bolshevism. Today the ruling class pursues the same struggle [against] Bolshevism under the name of Trotskyism, i.e. genuine revolutionary communism.

### **Who are these so-called workers’ leaders?**

Not satisfied with the murder and terror organised under their aegis against the Athens workers and trade unionists, the British ambassador – probably under the instructions of the British authorities – has arranged the repulsive farce of a delegation of so-called “Greek trade unionists” to thank him for saving them from communist tyranny! Unhappily, so clumsy and careless have the British imperialists been, that among these so-called “trade union leaders” is a prominent quisling named Krokos, who was associated with the Labour Front organised by Metaxas when he illegalised the trade unions, and continued undisturbed under Hitler. The others are of the same ilk, having no connection with the Greek trade unions – the General Confederation of Labour.

And these imperialist gangsters, cynically trampling on the organisations of the workers, try to palm off these fascists on the British workers as “representatives” of the Greek working class.

Not satisfied with having crushed the general strike and the armed resistance of the workers of Attica, [thus] protecting the fascists from the just wrath of the workers, general Scobie[73] flaunts his puppets in the face of the Greek workers and peasants. The demonstration in Athens which acclaimed Scobie and Churchill, was addressed by Scobie as “Greek workers”. Queer workers carrying portraits of king George and acclaiming general Zervas, organiser of the royalist fascist thugs – and shouting “no amnesty”! In reality it was a demonstration of counter-revolution – not of the workers, but of the same people who supported the quisling government in Greece, demonstrating in favour of anyone who would protect them from the workers. Whether it is Hitler or Churchill, it is all the same to them. Their one desire was to revenge themselves on the defeated workers – defeated not by them, but by British tanks, planes and guns.

### **Plastiras – the interventionist**

Plastiras, Churchill’s choice of a “democrat”, is leading the capitalist pack against EAM[74]. An apt choice for Churchill. Plastiras led a Greek army in the anti-Bolshevik crusade launched by Churchill in 1919. He learned his “democracy”, and how to treat the workers as a general, in Wrangel’s[75] White Guard army, which fought against the Red Army and hanged [and] tortured tens of thousands of Russian workers and peasants. A symbolic coincidence! Churchill and Plastiras remain true to themselves. They pursue the same aim now as they did then: the stamping out of socialism and workers’ power in any part of Europe where they may take control.

Plastiras at first stood out for the policy of exterminating ELAS[76]. And why not? The British troops with their military superiority were bound to win in the end and the Greek capitalists could step in and crush the betrayed workers and peasants.

Churchill was undoubtedly originally supporting this scheme. His first speeches on the Greek question after the fighting broke out indicated these intentions. But when it became clear that ELAS had the support of the overwhelming majority of the workers and peasants – and that to destroy it would require a long campaign – Churchill thought it necessary to use other means to achieve his ends. A long campaign which might require 10 to 20 divisions – the Nazis had that and couldn't hold down the Greek people – threatened too many complications nationally and internationally. The disgust of the British workers and soldiers, he feared, would inevitably result in some sort of action against British policy in Greece.

Through the puppet Plastiras, Churchill has already forced EAM to conclude a truce. For the time being, he has dropped the demand for complete disarmament and has allowed ELAS to retain control of the greater part of Greece – but the non-industrial parts. The ports and big towns will be under the control of the puppet government and the armed forces of British imperialism.

The British imperialists thus have the whip hand in Greece and can now organise the forces of counter-revolution – the so-called Greek army – without hindrance, in the strategic and economically important area which they have occupied.

### **Betrayal of British Labour leaders**

Under these circumstances, the base betrayal of the Greek workers by the leaders of the British Labour Party and Communist Party is absolutely flagrant. They have lied to the workers as to the real aims and intentions of Churchill and the ruling class in the war. They have confused the workers by talk of so-called “misinformation” and “confusion” of Churchill by the British ambassador and the military representatives in Greece. Disgraceful blathering! Churchill understood the position perhaps better than they did. And as a ruthless representative of his class, he obviously arranged for the “information” which he

desired to be sent to Britain, just as he invented a non-existent insurrection in Belgium when it suited his policy of repression with the aid of British troops there.

He prepared for his campaign of force and repression by systematic dissemination of lies, slander and misrepresentation. Aneurin Bevan quotes these instructions in the debate in Parliament:

“The Prime Minister has ruled that, in principle, no credit of any kind is to be given to ELAS or EAM on the BBC. In every case where it is thought desirable to make exceptions, his personal approval should first be obtained...”

*And these instructions were given to all services connected with Greek affairs by the Political Warfare Executive on August 1 1944, i.e. months before the conflict broke out!*

*As members of the Cabinet, the Labour leaders must have known what was taking place yet they remained silent and did not denounce the conspiracy that was obviously being prepared against the Greek workers. Thus they participated as partners in British capitalism’s counter-revolutionary plots against the European peoples. And the Stalinist so-called “Communist” Party traitors still continue to support the Churchill government! Not to speak of Aneurin Bevan and other Labour lefts who had not the courage to vote against the government after revealing its intentions!*

Thus, while Churchill and the ruling class have been preparing systematically to crush the workers in Europe with cold class calculations, the Labour and Stalinist leaders have been telling the workers fairy tales about “national unity” and the “interests of the nation”. Churchill and the Tories have pursued a consistent class policy in the interests of British capitalism, while the Labour and

Stalinist leaders have allowed the workers to be taken by surprise by events.

Hypocritically the “Communist” Party urge “protests” to the government that will and must remain so much hot air. They oppose and sabotage any suggestion of action to clip Churchill’s claws. They appeal to Beelzebub against Satan – “Please Churchill should not carry out the policy of Churchill!” All their “protests” are intended to check the uneasiness of the sincere and honest rank and file members of the Communist Party.

When Will Lawther[77], under the influence of the opposition of the British workers, proposed that the Labour ministers leave the government and that the labour movement organise councils of action if British intervention in Greece continued, instead of using this as a basis for a campaign throughout the trade unions and working class, the “Communist” Party remained silent on this question. The Daily Worker which published all the verbal protests of Labour and even Liberal spokesmen which were so much hot air, carefully censored Lawther’s speech and did not even print his proposals in the Daily Worker.

In Greece itself, the role of Stalinism has been the same. While the Greek ruling class was preparing to crush the working class, they tried to fool the workers with the same myth of “national unity”. Before the general strike and insurrection, provoked by the actions of the Greek puppet government, they did their best to capitulate to the reaction. EAM representatives in the Cabinet even accepted the proposal for disarmament of their forces, while the fascist Royalist Mountain Brigade and the Security Battalions were to remain armed. It was only the indignation and pressure of the masses – who refused to place themselves at the mercy of their bitter enemies – which compelled them to withdraw from the agreement.

It was the class instinct of the workers, who had learned in the bitter days of struggle against the Nazis, the lesson taught by Marx and Lenin that arms represent power, which made them resolve not to surrender their arms. They had

been mainly responsible for liberating Greece from Nazi domination and they were determined not to allow the capitalists, who had set up the Metaxas dictatorship[78] and collaborated with the quislings, to retain control and prepare the way for a new dictatorship.

*Stalin remains silent because he considers Warsaw well worth Athens. In return for the frontier in Poland and a government amenable to Stalin's foreign policy – while capitalism remains there – and a sphere of influence in the Balkans, Churchill gets a free hand in Greece. A cynical horse-deal behind the scenes has been arranged. Moreover, as Churchill well understands, Stalin is terrified of a revolutionary Balkans and complications throughout Europe. That is why he can jeer and pour well-deserved contempt on the Stalinist buffoon Willie Gallacher even when the latter makes a damaging point. Churchill sneeringly said:*

“Evidently the chance remark which I made the other day to the Hon. Member has stung him deeply. (Laughter).”

The chance remark was:

“Mr Gallacher (Com., W. Fife) – Will the statement to be made on Greece be a better balanced and more reliable one than the one we had from him before the recess?”

“Mr Churchill – Mr Gallacher must not get too excited about these matters, or he will fall into danger of Trotskyite deviation to the left. (Laughter).”

“I shall continue to probe carefully the exact political shade which he adopts...”

Churchill knows the role of Gallacher and the CP – he knows that Gallagher is but an agent of Stalin and Churchill is kicking him jeeringly into line. Even fake opposition, which is intended as a harmless safety valve for the communist workers is resented!

## **Greek workers were struggling for power**

But for the workers of the world the tragedy in Greece and its implications still remains! Churchill brushes aside criticism of the too voluble and indiscreet Plastiras, who openly threatens bloody reprisals against the Greek masses, with the cynical comment that the very existence of his government is dependent on British arms and the British government is not in favour of this.

The fact stands out that within a few days of the revolution – for that was what the instinctive movement of the Greek masses meant – the workers and peasants armed and organised in ELAS-EAM were in control of the whole of Greece including the major part of Athens. In Salonika and other cities the workers had established control over housing, factories, rationing, etc. Lenin never tired of emphasising that power, that the state, can be reduced to “armed bodies of men”; that what determines which class has the power, is which class controls the armed bodies of men. Churchill and the other representatives of capitalism understand this perfectly and that is why (despite the docile leadership of the Socialist and Stalinist leadership in the Resistance movement), because of the potentialities of an armed working class, they are so insistent on the disarming of the workers and peasants and are demanding the creation of “national” armies; i.e. armies where the officers and other cadres have been selected by the capitalists and are completely under capitalist control.

Thus the position in Greece was that the control of the situation was in the hands

of the working class! It was a situation similar to that of the Paris Commune and Spain in 1936, except that the leadership was more cowardly, ignorant and treacherous.

Power was in the grasp of the heroic Greek workers and peasants!

*All that was necessary was that they should expropriate the property of the capitalists, confiscate the land of the landlords for the peasants, and organise a workers' state with a workers' government!*

That the workers wanted to finish with capitalism once and for all [was] indicated by a report of their mood published in the Daily Telegraph of January 31 1945:

“In those tense Athenian weeks before the Greek Communist Party’s rebellion broke out, the whole city was painted over with KKE slogans, among them ‘Vengeance!’ ‘Death to the traitors!’ and ‘Death to the bourgeois’.

Throughout the conflict the main pre-occupation of the leadership has been to try and capitulate on terms which would not expose them completely in the eyes of the rank and file! Thus when Churchill (as the representative of British imperialism) – who was primarily responsible for the bitter war of intervention in Greece – flew to Athens, they publicly fawned on and praised him despite the fact that the butchery of the Greek workers was planned by him well in advance.

They appealed for a compromise: Damaskinos[79] as regent! And Damaskinos became regent and promptly denounced EAM in stringent terms! They asked for elections, a request which was refused – until the workers have been thoroughly



tamed and broken and a majority for reaction – “republican” if the masses still refuse to “wear” the king – can be ensured.

As an inevitable result of this policy of compromise and capitulation to the capitalist class at a critical stage in the struggle, big sections of the reformists and liberals, especially the latter, have openly gone over to the side of the reaction. Now conversations are going on for the EAM leaders once again to participate in the capitalist government. It is most likely that some face-saving sell-out agreement will be reached. Despite the heroism of the Greek workers and peasants, they will be crushed and betrayed into the hands of the capitalists.

Yet victory was within their grasp. The British troops in Greece do not like the dirty job of repressing the Greek people. A wave of horror and revulsion has passed through the ranks of the British working class. But the shouts for “democracy” by both sides resulted in confusion as to what was taking place. A clear class call for internationalism, for workers’ solidarity, would have echoed and re-echoed throughout the ranks of the British workers in overalls and uniform. Gallacher appropriately reminded Churchill this is not the first time he has organised a war of intervention against the working class. But this renegade failed to point out [that] Churchill’s intervention against the Soviet Union collapsed only because of the revolutionary internationalist policy of Lenin and Trotsky! In the war of intervention against the Soviet Union, not a single capitalist army could be persuaded to continue fighting against the Russian workers. Churchill’s lies and slanders were useless against this weapon of the Bolsheviks – revolutionary internationalism. His tanks, planes and guns were of no use to him. The American army mutinied, the French, the German and others; the British army demanded that they be sent home. This was only because the Bolsheviks, the “Trotskyists” as Churchill would call them today, carried through the socialist revolution and made a class appeal to the workers and soldiers of the world. A class appeal ceaselessly propagated by the Greek workers and peasants would have had the same result.

The Greek workers and peasants will not forget the lessons burned in their

consciousness under fire if the Trotskyists in Greece, (and our Party though small, played a role in these events) have been explaining the role of reformism and Stalinism in what has taken place. A temporary lull may ensue in the class struggle, only to break out with greater intensity in the next period. The martyred Greek workers will learn the lessons! They will not forget.

But Greece is not the end, it is only the beginning. Churchill is already preparing to deal with the revolutionary workers in the North of Italy. The ruling class is preparing to strike against the German workers as soon as Hitler falls. They are preparing to try and crush the revolution throughout Europe in the next period. And even now Churchill and the ruling class are preparing to settle accounts with the British workers too!

The advanced workers of Greece and of the world must understand the lessons of this conflict. Agreements and coalitions with the capitalists can only lead to disaster and defeat. No support to any section of the capitalist class can serve the interests of the workers. Class collaboration means capitulation to capitalism. Reformism and Stalinism can only lead to victory in the class struggle for the capitalists. Only a party carrying through the policy of revolutionary communism can lead the working class to power!

Build the Fourth International which alone unites the workers of all lands under the banner: "Workers of the world, unite!"

# **Crimea decisions kept from masses**

**By Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 7 No. 1, March 1945]

An avalanche of propaganda was let loose after the Crimea conference. Capitalist, labour and Stalinist press all over the world lauded the decisions.

The Daily Worker announced straight from the horse's mouth that all future wars are ended by the decisions at Crimea. To add colour and drama to the situation, all the puppet states rattled their swords, sounded the bugles of battle, and declared war on Germany and Japan.

Concretely, what has been achieved? An announcement to destroy Germany, but this is a repetition of old statements poured through press and radio for five years. Stalin is to have his way in Poland and the London puppets are to be liquidated in favour of the Lublin puppets. This is an accomplished fact known for months.

No one will shed tears over the liquidation of [the] London Polish [government in exile] except the anti-Soviet diehards. No one gloats over the success of the Lublin government except the Stalinists. To the Polish masses, as revealed in the betrayal of Warsaw, both are criminals. Fundamentally, they offer only the continuation of capitalist regime in Poland, with all the pre-1939 spectres of horror. Once again the Polish masses will have to renew their struggles, and look

beyond Lublin – beyond Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt to the working classes abroad for solidarity and assistance. Crimea has not solved one single problem of the Polish workers and the peasants.

Churchill made one of his purple speeches in the House of Commons. Following a tourist guide, he described the places he visited, the luncheons he attended, the banquets he gave, and conveyed the generally prevalent atmosphere after a good dinner, plenty of wine and expensive cigars. At the end of all this, he concluded his speech with a peroration that “far reaching decisions” had been taken.

That is the crux of the matter. “Far reaching” decisions were taken, but they are secret decisions on which the working classes are not to express their opinions.

Remember the flamboyant announcement of the Atlantic Charter and the Teheran conference. Later when the question became more concrete, Churchill revealed that the Charter did not apply to India or British colonies. It did not apply even to the enemy countries. In fact, it did not apply to anyone at all. Surpassing this cynicism, Roosevelt said that it will find a good place in historical archives, and in any case it was not signed by anybody and committed no one to the policy. But one concrete point which did remain a secret – a point on which Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill agreed – that was [on the] Greek revolution. Churchill chartered the course of action British imperialism would take and received the approval of Roosevelt and Stalin.

To get a correct picture of the Crimea conference, similarly, it is necessary not to merely examine the platitudes uttered by Churchill echoed by the Daily Worker – but to examine what he failed to mention. What is the attitude of Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt to the coming European revolutions? Surely, if the Greek situation seemed explosive at Teheran and decisions were made to put the revolution down – although not revealed until 12 months later – isn't the whole of Europe a volcano today? The economic chaos is deepening, starvation is on the order of the day. The destruction of the German military machine will

unleash the working class of Germany and Europe for the seizure of power. Did the “Big Three” arrange their plans to deal with the situation? It is obvious that this item must have been a major problem on the agenda. It is obvious what plans were devised and plotted against the working class. But these “far reaching” decisions were not revealed to the masses.

The Stalinists would cynically say that the conference decided to support the democratic demands of the masses. If so, why the secrecy? If Churchill would have announced after Teheran that the Greek revolution would be crushed, and Stalin had sanctioned its crushing, as he did after the event, what would have been the reaction of the British workers?

That is not all. It is obvious that some of the French colonies will be taken away. How are these colonies – mandated territories taken from France and Japan – to be disposed of? By giving them freedom? The American Wall Street Journal, Capital, revealed some time ago that Britain was forced to agree to an American seizure of the Japanese colonies.

Stalin also must have put forward his claims in the Far East. How were they settled at Crimea? Or was all this merely discussed and the three agreed to settle their claims at a future date at the point of a bayonet? Churchill did not utter a word on this question.

For some time now a conflict has been going on in the Middle East. Britain demanded oil concessions in Iraq; the Americans put forward the same demand; Stalin also spoke. Roosevelt saw the Arab chiefs – apparently Churchill learned about it after reaching Yalta. Fearing to lose the British imperialist grip in the Middle East, he decided to entertain the Arab chiefs. Once again, what was decided over the Middle East? Was the fate of Palestine discussed? Who is to get the oil concessions? Churchill is silent.

If all these things were discussed as they must have been in a Conference lasting nine days, with all the economic experts attending, not a word to the House of Commons and the British public.

It is clear that the root causes of war will remain, and cannot be eradicated by arguments of the imperialist powers with the Stalinist bureaucracy. Behind the superficial agreements reached at Crimea, the conflict between British and American imperialism and the Soviet Union continues. The demands of each, the manoeuvres to dominate, will continue at San Francisco.

The second factor on which there was agreement was the creation of a glorified League of Nations. Five countries, in words, are to dominate it. But in effect, China and France will play a minor role. Already, even Britain is thrust aside, and the American capitalist press speaks of two great powers, meaning the Soviet Union and America. What can such a League of Nations do in a conflict between the USA and the USSR?

However distorted by the Stalinist bureaucracy, as long as Russia remains based on nationalised means of production, it is a pistol aimed at world capitalism. Sooner or later world capitalism will seek its destruction. In such a struggle what functions can a League of Nations perform?

The two factors on which agreement was reached and announced to the world, lay the foundations for the third world war. All experts agree that Europe is a unified economic entity. The Treaty of Versailles, by splitting or maintaining Europe into tiny units, with tariff barriers and armaments race, created the conditions for the Second World War. In European economy Germany occupies the key position. The solution to the problem of wars does not lie along the lines of Balkanisation. That will only reduce the European masses to a low level of living, to be kept as pawns in the game of power politics. Only a unified European economy – in which the feudal remnants [and] capitalism have been overthrown and the working class [is] firmly in the seat of power in all the

European countries, primarily Germany – can give peace and plenty for all.

In such a socialist united states of Europe, once again the German working class will occupy the key position. Crimea can decide what it likes, but the only alternatives for the working class are a third world war or a socialist Germany in a socialist united states of Europe.

The decisions at the Crimea conference, announced publicly are only a deception and a delusion. The real decisions shrouded in mystery for the working class, can only lead to further wars and misery. The labour movement must demand of its leaders to put an end to secret diplomacy of the imperialist gangsters; the workers have the right to know what plots are being hatched which will determine the destiny of the masses of Europe and the world.

# **The changed relationship of forces in Europe and the role of the Fourth International**

**By Ted Grant**

[Workers' International News, "RCP conference decisions", September 1945]  
[80]

The end of the war opens out a new stage of the military, diplomatic, economic and political developments of the world.

The overwhelming economic and military preponderance of the Soviet Union in the East, and of American imperialism with her British satellite in the West, has finally resulted in the reduction of German and Japanese imperialism to dust.

Following in the wake of the victorious "allied" armies, the "big three" with their foreign secretaries and advisers meet, discuss, and arrive at secret diplomatic agreements to partition Europe and the world into spheres of influence and zones of exploitation. The satellite states are invited into the councils of the United Nations, but only to create a facade and lend weight to the decisions arrived at by the hard bargaining behind the scenes on the part of the big three.

Overshadowing the military and diplomatic arrangements, however, is the fear of proletarian revolution in Germany and in Europe as a whole; and not only in Europe but in the colonial areas of the East. This cardinal problem, which again



and again raises itself for a forceful solution, is rapidly becoming the main preoccupation of the three big powers. Indeed, the cardinal point in the alliance which now cements the “big three” together, and will do so in the future, is this fear of revolution and the preoccupation with the plans for staving off, or repressing the inevitable revolutionary upheavals in Germany and Europe which will seek to destroy the old capitalist order.

The changed relationship of forces between the world powers since the Treaty of Versailles, hidden in their gradual transformation between the two world wars, is now clearly demonstrated in the military fortunes of the nations.

The destruction of the French army, once the mightiest military force in Europe; the disintegration of the French empire; the miserable role of the ruling class in France during the Nazi occupation as quislings of the conqueror; all these have served to underline the decline of France from the status of a great power to the role of a third rate power in Europe and the world.

The bubble of empire pretensions, widely advertised by the Italian ruling class through their strutting black-shirted legions, has been pricked and shattered. The weak and insufficient economic base, incapable of the slightest strain, cracked at the first test. Italy is reduced to the role of a Balkan country.

Both in the East of Europe and the West, the war has entirely altered the importance of the nations in the new alignment of forces. Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic and Balkan countries, Belgium, Holland, and the Scandinavian lands – all these have a lesser weight and role to play in the “councils of the nations”.

The collapse of British hegemony of the globe; the inability of Britain to maintain her position on the continent of Europe or to intervene decisively in the

military struggles; the subordination of her military leaders on the continent of Europe to those of her Yankee patrons; and her general decline in relation to her Russo-American allies is rapidly placing Britain in her real relationship to the other powers – the “biggest of the small nations”.

The entry into the world arena of American imperialism with her gigantic economic and military resources, has immediately placed her far in the forefront of the imperialist nations. Both in the East and in the West, the weight of the economic and military forces assures her of a dominant position. The Pacific is fast becoming an “American lake”, while the British dominions gravitate towards the dollar and remain only nominally tied to the motherland.

### **The emergence of Russia from the war**

*But by far the greatest event of world significance is the emergence of Russia, for the first time in history, as the greatest military power in Europe and Asia. The tremendous victories of the Red Army in Europe have forced the majority of the European bourgeoisie to orientate themselves towards the Kremlin; whilst the pro-Soviet movement on the part of the masses, has created a powerful basis of support.*

*In Europe today there is no continental power left which can effect a challenge to the Red Army. Nor is it possible to create in a few years a military force capable, materially and morally, of undertaking such a challenge. Only on the basis of a complete defeat for the European working class, the total destruction of its organisations and the introduction of a Yankee black reaction, would it be possible to regroup the forces of European capitalism for an anti-Russian assault.*

The weariness of the masses in all countries, especially in Europe, the

admiration and support for the Red Army, the sympathy and warm support for the Soviet Union among broad sections of the working class even in the United States – all these factors taken together with the relation of military forces, make it extremely difficult, if not entirely impossible for the Allies to launch an attack on the Soviet Union in the immediate post-war years.

The risks of such an operation are far too great in their political implications, not only in Europe or Asia where the masses would support the Soviet Union, but in Britain and America. Ideologically it would not be possible to mobilise the masses for such a war which would tend to expose the whole nature of the previous struggle against the Axis[81]. Moreover, such a war would be inevitably protracted because of the military might of the Soviet Union, thus ushering in revolutionary explosions throughout the globe. For the next period, despite the antagonisms, the Allies will be forced to tolerate a deal with the Soviet Union.

### **The plans of the imperialists went wrong**

German imperialism confidently anticipated the destruction and disintegration of the Soviet state; the Anglo-American imperialists expected and hoped for the downfall of the Soviet Union, but wished to use Russia simultaneously to break the power of German imperialism, leaving them the victors. They expected at least that the Soviet Union would emerge broken and weakened decisively and thus be unable to resist the demands and impositions they planned to impose upon her.

But their calculations went wrong. An outstanding result of the imperialist war is the definitive emergence of the Soviet Union from a backward state, to the greatest military power on the continent of Europe. This has upset all the calculations of the imperialists of both camps. The results have induced a cold sweat in all the chancelleries of the world.

The war in Europe in great part resolved itself into a war between Germany, armed with the resources of the whole of Europe, and the Soviet Union. And from this decisive test Russia has emerged victorious.

The Stalinist bureaucracy has a two-fold purpose in occupying the countries of Eastern Europe: a strategic defence position against its allies; and the domination, plunder and enslavement of the Balkan and Central European peoples in the interests of the bureaucracy itself. However, the entrance of the Red Army into Eastern Europe provoked a movement among wide strata of the oppressed workers and peasants. The Stalinist bureaucracy has utilised this movement in order to place their puppets firmly in control of the governments. Meanwhile, in order to placate his allies, Stalin has retained capitalism in the areas under his control which have not been incorporated into the Soviet Union, while making concessions in land reforms to the peasants.

Another reason for the retention of capitalism in the occupied areas lies in the fear of the bureaucracy of the inevitable repercussions of setting in motion the forces of the proletarian revolution, even in caricature form in the Balkans and throughout the continent of Europe. The highly explosive situation would mean the spreading of the movement beyond the control of the bureaucracy and would threaten to have tremendous repercussions on the Red Army and the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union.

Thus, the occupation of Germany and Eastern Europe serves, for the bureaucracy, a dual purpose. It aims at defending the Soviet Union by methods which serve the reactionary aims and needs of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Such methods have nothing in common with, in fact are the negation of Leninism. In relation to the European revolution the Soviet occupation is intended for the purpose of strangling and destroying the revolution of the proletariat.

With the fall of German imperialism the defence of the Soviet Union, which formerly assumed the first importance in the tasks of the proletariat of the Soviet Union in relation to the war, now gives place to the defence of the European revolution against the Soviet bureaucracy. The Red Army is used as a weapon of counter-revolution in the hands of the Bonapartist bureaucracy. For the European proletariat the counter-revolutionary policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy assumes the form of a mortal danger.

Nevertheless, the situation is fraught with mortal danger to the Stalinist bureaucracy. Inevitably the Red Army workers and peasants will fraternise with the workers and peasants of the conquered countries. The soldiers will see the complete falsity of the propaganda of the bureaucracy as to conditions in other countries compared with those in Russia.

In general it can be said that in the coming period either the retention of capitalism in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe occupied by the USSR will serve as a starting point for the restoration of capitalism within the Soviet Union itself by providing the bureaucracy with the opportunity of acquiring the ownership of the means of production; or the bureaucracy will be forced, against its own wishes and at the risk of antagonising its present imperialist allies, to nationalise industry in the permanently occupied countries, acting from above and, if possible, without the participation of the masses.

The Fourth International, while explaining the nature of the Soviet Union and the necessity of its defence from world imperialism, will expose the counter-revolutionary role of the bureaucracy in relation to the European and world revolution. At the next stage the main task in the defence of the Soviet Union lies in the defence of the European revolution against the conspiracy of the Stalinist bureaucracy with world imperialism. Where the Red Army, which remains under the control of the bureaucracy as an instrument of its policy, is used to crush and destroy the movement of the masses towards revolution, or in the suppression of workers' uprisings and insurrections, the Fourth International will call on the workers to oppose the Red Army with all the means in their

power, including strikes, armed force, etc., while appealing to the Red Army soldiers to remember the mission of October and come over to the side of the working class. The defence of the Soviet Union can best be served by an extension of October, and the revival of soviet democracy within the Soviet Union.

The Great Russian Stalinist bureaucracy stifles the national aspirations of the national minorities within the Soviet Union. While subordinating the struggle for independence to the defence of the Soviet Union, the Revolutionary Communist Party stands for the right of the Ukrainian, Baltic and other Soviet minorities to secede from the Stalinist Soviet Union and form independent socialist states. But the secession is a reactionary utopia unless it is conceived of as part of a struggle for soviet democracy, the overthrow of Stalinism, and for the unification of the democratised USSR with the United Socialist States of Europe.

During the course of the war the separation of the bureaucratic caste from the masses and its elevation above them, has received tremendous impetus. Nothing remains of the gains of October except the basic conquest: nationalised property. Power has passed from the hands of the civil bureaucracy to the military bureaucracy with the galaxy of marshals at its head. Contradictory processes are taking place in the Soviet Union. On the one hand the course of the war has accelerated the proletarianisation of new strata of the population, of women and even children. Thus, the Soviet proletariat today cannot be far short of the number of proletarians in the United States. On the other hand, the differentiation between the bureaucracy and the masses, assumes more and more a capitalist character. Thus, two opposite tendencies are revealed. The capitalist tendencies look more and more to the capitalist West, the vices of which the Soviet bureaucracy has completely assimilated. The Soviet masses are well aware of the crimes of the bureaucracy, of whom they have an intense hatred. The victorious workers, peasants and soldiers will present their account to the Soviet bureaucracy on the morrow. The victories of the Red Army cannot but have imbued the Soviet masses with a tremendous élan and self-confidence. They will not so easily accept the impositions and excuses of the bureaucracy once the danger from capitalist intervention has declined. The war and the Herculean struggle have thrust the mass of the population out of their despair

and apathy. The war has been the means of revolutionising Soviet society no less than that in capitalist countries.

The victories of the Soviet Union are a capital for the world revolution, both in the effects on the masses in Europe and the world, as well as in their preservation of nationalised economy. But it is necessary for the working classes to understand the dual, contradictory process.

On the one hand the victories of the Red Army arouse echoes of the October revolution in the European masses; on the other hand the bureaucracy uses the Red Army and its agencies – the communist parties – for the purposes of strangling the proletarian revolution.

From a purely economic point of view, even with bureaucratic excesses and the stifling of the initiative of the masses, the Soviet Union will probably be in a position to restore production within a few years, to the level achieved before the war. Further economic successes could be maintained, but that is not to say that the war has not had profound effects upon Soviet economic life, or that post-war economic developments in the Soviet Union will take place smoothly and without crises. During the past four years the whole economy has been adapted to an almost exclusive production of war equipment. The remarkable productive results which have been obtained, have been won only at great cost – the wearing out of machinery, the elimination of consumers' industries, the physical exhaustion of the workers. Consequently in the future, we can expect sharp crises arising out of the disproportions inside the Soviet economy; crises such as occurred in the pre-war years and which no amount of "planning" by the bureaucracy can overcome, since they are basically due to the fact that the nationalised economy of the Soviet Union is an isolated and not a world economy.

The already existing disproportions between the various branches of Soviet economy, between light and heavy industry, between industry and agriculture,

have all been greatly accentuated as a result of the war. In particular the position of agriculture, which had even by 1941 not yet completely recovered from the ravages of the period of forced collectivisation and which has been largely devastated by the present war, will pose problems not capable of final solution within the framework of the isolated economy of the Soviet Union.

But nevertheless, the advantages of the nationalised economy are such, that despite those economic contradictions, and within their framework, great productive achievements are possible upon a scale and at a speed far beyond the powers of even the most advanced capitalist states.

The differentiation within the Soviet Union has reached such proportions that the perspectives resolve themselves into three possibilities:

It is theoretically not excluded that on the basis of an ascending economy, the bureaucracy could maintain itself for a further period of years;

The further degeneration of the Soviet bureaucracy would prepare the way for capitalist restoration;

The proletarian resurgence would result in the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the restoration of Soviet democracy.

The bourgeoisie of the world, and above all Anglo-American imperialism, is staking everything on the internal degeneration taking place within the Soviet Union. Through economic pressure from without and the reaction within, they are hoping to restore capitalism in the USSR. On the basis of the victory of the reaction in Europe and Asia, they hope eventually to restore capitalism, if necessary by military means. Meanwhile, despite sharp clashes, they are compelled to defer the settlement of this account and to utilise the services of the Kremlin to strangle the revolution, which directly and immediately threatens the very existence of capitalism in Europe and Asia. Thus the bourgeoisie utilise the



services of the bureaucracy today in the hour of mortal danger of capitalism, in order to strangle the Soviet Union when the crisis has been surmounted.

But despite the proportions to which the bureaucracy has grown, the situation presents favourable factors for the resuscitation of workers' power. The economic conquests are in contradiction with the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, which becomes an increasing burden on the economy of the country. The power of the traditions of October, even overlaid as it is with the bureaucratic filth, has been shown in the war. Coming events will reveal many surprises for the world bourgeoisie as well as for the Stalinist bureaucracy. Collective ownership, which has revealed its superiority in peace as in war, now finds itself in sharper conflict with the bureaucracy. It will be in the political crisis which the aftermath of the war will bring, that the full weakness of the bureaucracy will be shown. Collisions between the workers and peasants, between the soldiers demanding the fruits of victory and the usurpers, are inevitable. It is in these clashes that the mighty Soviet proletariat, and its vanguard the fourth internationalists, with its tradition of three revolutions and two victorious wars, will find itself once again.

## **The national question in Europe**

Despite the ease with which the Nazi war machine overran all Europe, but a few years were needed to reveal that the conquest was illusory. The Nazis were incapable of holding down the suffering peoples for whom the conquest meant intensified poverty and famine, on top of the insufferable burden of a totalitarian alien yoke. Without a clear class programme as the basis of their struggle, and at the cost of innumerable victims, the masses still succeeded in undermining the Nazi domination of Europe.

The ruling class of the conquered countries, willingly or unwillingly, joined hands with the Nazi overlords and became managers and junior partners of the

conquerors. The champions of “national dignity” and “national unity” in the hour of defeat, united with the oppressor against the mass of their own nation. Class interests, like water, find their own level.

If the Nazis succeeded with the aid of quislings, backed by the SS with its torture and terror, in maintaining a precarious hold for a time, this was due to the assistance rendered them by the policies of Social Democracy and Stalinism. The appeal to national chauvinism could not but aid the German imperialists to draw the German worker and peasant behind them in the “struggle between the races”; it could not but act as a national cement for the Nazi gangsters and the German bourgeoisie. Faced with the choice between national enslavement of others, or themselves becoming nationally enslaved, the German soldiers continued to act as forces of occupation, no doubt with bitterness in their hearts. An internationalist socialist appeal from the mass illegal organisations of the working class, or from the leadership of the Soviet Union, and a systematic campaign of class fraternisation would have echoed, and had results in the far corners of the German Reich and Nazi empire. But such an appeal was never made. Systematic class fraternisation and action was never organised.

### **Our attitude to the resistance movements**

Organised resistance to the foreign oppressor was initiated by the Stalinists, social democrats, petty bourgeois parties and sections of the bourgeoisie. Within the heterogeneous groups which formed the resistance, the class contradictions and antagonisms found sharp and organised expression, and in some countries came to the point of civil war.

In Poland, Yugoslavia and in Greece, the sharp division resulted in dual and rival movements of resistance. Zervas[82] and EDES were representative of the old feudal capitalist reaction, who at certain stages even rested upon the Nazis as against Tito and Siantos, who in turn represented the plebeian masses. To a

lesser extent, this same division was to be found in all the occupied countries; as in France, with the Maquis and the FTP.

In the clashes and armed struggles which took place from time to time, the “left” wing, or elements of the resistance resting directly on the revolutionary sections of the people, were forced under the pressure of class antagonisms into collisions with the elements representing the bourgeoisie. Despite the “national”, non-class policy of betrayal by the leadership, the movement represented the strivings and pressure of the masses for a class solution, thus, the revolutionary socialists were duty bound to give critical support to the left wing against the right.

But even the left wing of the resistance movement was not based on broad committees, but on an agreement of the parties. As such it was a bloc of parties, and particularly in face of the quisling role of the bulk of the bourgeoisie, it was a caricature of the popular front. Despite the support of thousands of loyal proletarian fighters, who saw in these left sections of the resistance movement an answer to their class aspirations, the chauvinist petty bourgeois programme, leadership and activity of the resistance bloc, characterised it as a direct agency of imperialism.

In the midst of the imperialist war, all the objective conditions are such that a genuine struggle for national liberation and a break-up of the alliance with imperialism, could only have been undertaken on the basis of a socialist programme, under the slogan of the socialist united states of Europe. Organised struggle on any other basis, on the policy of both wings of the resistance was to aid one bloc of imperialists in the midst of the war.

The Trotskyists, therefore, could not dip their banner by entering into the bloc of parties and support this caricature popular front. Whilst supporting and where possible, giving leadership to every real move of the masses: strikes, demonstrations, and armed clashes, the Trotskyists had the duty to denounce the resistance bloc as such, and its leadership as an arm and agency of Anglo-

American imperialism, hostile to the class interests of the working class.

In opposition to the military formations of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois-inspired resistance movement the proletarian party has the duty to counterpose, and wherever possible, to organise independent military formations of the working class as well as its own independent military formations.

Implacable hostility to the “resistance bloc” is supplemented by flexible tactics in the operation of party policy. The organisations of the resistance were important fields for revolutionary activity. The revolutionary party had the duty to send its cadres into the resistance movements counterposing a proletarian to a bourgeois and petty bourgeois programme, helping to destroy the influence of the bourgeoisie over militant sections of the working class, and organising a conscious proletarian opposition to the policy of chauvinism and the chauvinistic leaders.

The “liberation” of the continent by Anglo-American imperialism posed the problem of the class struggle in an acute form. With the lifting of the heavy hand of totalitarian suppression by German imperialism, the national question tended to be thrust into the background. Only a prolonged military occupation over a period of years by the forces of Anglo-American imperialism and of the Stalinist bureaucracy, could raise the national question to an important place in the politics of the European continent. The indirect oppression and exploitation by the big three powers, the military intervention on the side of the old ruling class against the proletariat would tend rather to raise the class issues in the consciousness of the European peoples. It is in the case of Germany that the national problem will assume an acute character with the dismemberment and subjugation of Germany by the Allies.

## **Classic conditions for the proletarian revolution**

The majority of the European bourgeoisie, which has already been badly shaken by the great mass movements of a few years preceding the outbreak of the war, proved incapable of leading the nations which they had summoned to the “defence of the fatherland”. Further demoralised by the military defeat, without perspective, and filled with hatred for their own working class, almost the entire ruling class of the conquered countries fraternised with the enemy and organised the joint exploitation together with the foreign oppressor, of the mass of their own nation. Thus, as quislings they earned the hatred of the overwhelming mass of the workers and petty bourgeoisie.

The victory of the Allies now finds the bourgeoisie seeking to play the same role for the “liberators” as they did for the “conquerors”. Without stable organs of state oppression, panic-stricken in the face of the mounting wrath of the masses, demoralised and without that confidence which is essential to an exploiting ruling class, they are completely dependent on allied bayonets for the continuation of their rule.

At the other pole, the mass of the working class no longer wants the old regime. The experience of a generation of capitalist rule since the last world war, plus a demonstration of the role of their own ruling class under the Nazi occupation; unemployment and starvation, fascism and national humiliation; the recognition that whilst the masses carried the struggle against the foreign oppressor, the ruling class collaborated and enriched themselves; and finally, the gigantic victories of the Red Army with all its associations with the October revolution – all these factors have resulted in a transformation of the outlook of the working masses.

The workers of Europe are breaking with bourgeois parliamentary politics and social democratic reformism and are turning to revolutionary politics and communism – unfortunately at this stage to the Stalinist parties, its caricatured and distorted form.

Total war and the defeat accelerated the concentration of capital and the ruination of the middle class especially in the towns. In their hundreds and thousands the petty bourgeoisie has been rudely pushed down into the ranks of the workers. They have been forced into the factories and slave labour camps; they have been proletarianised. On the background of working class radicalisation a corresponding change has taken place within the ranks of the petty bourgeoisie.

As always, the most oppressed strata of the population – the women and the youth – have had to bear the greatest burdens of the war, and here too, particularly among the youth the desire for a radical change and a communist solution of the problems of the day has taken a firm hold.

Thus all the objective conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and the introduction of socialism are clearly in existence. But the subjective factors are not yet established. The mass revolutionary parties of the Fourth International have not yet been created. To transform the small Trotskyist groups and parties into the fighting leadership of the working class is the most important question facing our comrades in Europe. Without mass Trotskyist parties the masses, blindfolded by social democracy and particularly by Stalinism will batter their heads in vain against the ramparts of capitalism.

Only the numerical weakness of the cadres of the Fourth International and the isolation of our comrades, gives the ruling class the possibility of a breathing space. The leadership of the bourgeoisie is aware of its own class needs, despite its demoralisation. They must at all costs crush the working class; but they lack the forces to do so at the moment.

## **The experience of Greece**

The events in Greece[83] marked the beginning of a new phase of revolution and counter-revolution within Europe. In this tiny country, where the explosive force of centuries of class antagonism has accumulated and which has been in turmoil for three decades, civil war broke out and was followed by a ruthless and brutal war of intervention by the British imperialists.

In the conflict between royalists and republicans during the past generation, the bourgeoisie, incapable of taking decisive action against the feudal landlords, were equally incapable of solving the problems of the democratic revolution and invariably paved the way for monarchist reaction. The restoration of King George[84] was followed by the dictatorship of Metaxas in an endeavour to restore “tranquility” and class “peace”. This “experiment” was aimed at atomising the Greek working class and peasant movement which threatened to upset the old regime and move in the direction of socialist revolution – as indicated by the strikes of the workers and revolts of sections of the peasantry. The British imperialists, whose financial and strategic interests forced them to regard Greece as a sub-colony, assisted the Greek ruling class in carrying out this reactionary move.

The viciousness of the Metaxas dictatorship had already undermined the basis of the Greek ruling class and created a popular movement of revolt before the war. But the collaboration of the Greek ruling class with the German conqueror as quislings crystallised the hostility of the masses and thus generated the explosion once the German troops had been withdrawn.

The attempt to foist the old ruling class and even the monarchy upon the masses was not to be tolerated without a struggle. The masses, who had fought a ruthless and bloody war against the SS had been largely responsible for the liberation of Greece. De facto control was in their hands through the armed organisation, ELAS. Thus, the provocation of the Greek government police in firing on unarmed demonstrators was sufficient to precipitate the armed uprising. Without preparation, organisation, or a clear idea of how to achieve their aims, the valiant

Greek proletariat and peasantry went into action. But due to the lack of a revolutionary leadership, the struggle was defeated.

The Stalinist leadership diverted the movement into safe channels on the familiar pattern of the peoples' front, and the movement's social aims were placed in the straight jacket of bourgeois parliamentarism. Thus the ground was laid for defeat and capitulation on the part of the Stalinist leadership.

Once again, the Greek events demonstrated that without a revolutionary party the masses will be led to disaster especially when the class struggle leads to open civil war. Without the party the masses cannot achieve the conquest of power.

However, leaving aside the local peculiarities, Greece represented in itself a model of the problems and lessons for all Europe. Churchill's policy of unrelenting repression was dictated by considerations of imperialist strategy as much as by internal class relationships. With the Stalinist bureaucracy dominant throughout the Balkans by the occupation of the victorious Red Army, it was essential for Britain's imperialist interests in the Mediterranean to have a firm hold over Greece. Even so, in Greece, the imperialists have received an object lesson on the difficulties of an open policy of military repression in Europe. The most sober and realistic section of the ruling class in Britain was opposed throughout to the blundering, adventuristic policy of repression of Churchill. Even in a small country of six million inhabitants, the dangers of such a course of action were revealed by the development of events. British imperialism was compelled to compromise with the petty bourgeois traitors in the leadership of EAM.

The Plastiras[85] government and its successor the Voulgaris government represent an uneasy attempt to restore the equilibrium of bourgeois society in Greece. Elements of Bonapartism and military dictatorship are undoubtedly present in this set-up. Nevertheless, the compromise arrived at with the capitulation of the Stalinist leadership, in however attenuated a form (due to the



struggle of the masses and the uneasiness of the British proletariat), has left the masses with their organisations, though not completely intact, still far from being destroyed.

This uneasy balance of forces cannot last indefinitely. Either the monarchy will be restored which would inevitably lead to a systematic extermination of the organisations of the proletariat, or the reaction might still feel itself too weak and attempt to manoeuvre with a republic. Even with the latter, however, the present regime could not last long. An impulsion from below would inevitably sweep it aside and the bourgeoisie would attempt to manipulate the political scene again through its popular front agencies. However, developments in Greece will depend to a great extent on events in Western Europe, the Balkans and Britain. Only one thing is predetermined: for the next period the regime in Greece will go through one crisis after another.

### **The counter-revolution in a “democratic” form**

Greece has revealed the heat lightning of the revolutionary storm gathering in Europe. The bourgeoisie of the entire world has assessed these events in correct perspective. The basis of the old system has broken down throughout the whole of ruined Europe. The disappearance of Hitler and Mussolini means the end of a stable basis for reaction in Europe, at least for the next immediate period.

Under conditions of ferment and radicalisation of the masses, with the rebelliousness of the masses turning directly on the road of insurrection; with the thrice-ruined petty bourgeoisie turning away in hatred and disgust against the combines and monopolies, from the influence of capitalist reaction, the task of Anglo-American imperialism to restore “order” to Europe, to establish the rule of capital, assumes the shape of complicated and dexterous manoeuvres. To bludgeon the masses will be difficult at this stage and it will be necessary to deceive them with the panaceas of “progress”, “reforms”, “democracy”, as

against the horrors of totalitarian rule. In Europe, however, control of the situation has largely slipped out of the hands of the bourgeoisie. It is the mass organisations of the working class which will have the decisive say.

With the fall of Mussolini, the instant appearance of soviet forms of organisation organised by sections of the workers, soldiers and peasants marked the appearance of the proletariat once more on the political arena. Here too, dual power in its elementary stages was immediately apparent. But once again, the main hindrance and drag on the development of the revolution has been the policy of the old workers' parties. The consciousness of the masses is still at an elementary stage; they do not want capitalism and the old regime and have aspirations to follow the example of the Russian workers in the October revolution. But as yet they do not understand the role of the old workers' parties as brakes on the development of the struggle; as yet they do not understand the need for a mass Trotskyist party.

The whole of Western Europe presents a picture of revolutionary crises in their embryonic stages. The lifting of the heavy hand of totalitarian suppression revealed the forces that have been developing beneath the surface. In Belgium, Holland and even Scandinavia the same process of mass resistance to the oppression and the estrangement from the emigre cliques of the old "governments" is plainly seen.

Eastern Europe presents a similar picture of the development of the molecular process of the revolution. The heroic insurrection of the Warsaw workers[86] at the approach of the Red Army even though distorted and misled by the London Committee, is indicative of the mood of the masses of Poland. The calculated betrayal of Warsaw by the Stalinist bureaucracy underlined the counter-revolutionary role which it played in Europe and the world.

It would be true to say that faced with mass revolutionary parties of the working class in Europe, the position of the bourgeoisie would be hopeless. But given the

weakness of the revolutionary vanguard, as Lenin explained, there is no hopeless position for the bourgeoisie. Social democracy saved capitalism after the last war. Today there are two traitor “internationals” at the service of capital – Stalinism and Social Democracy. They, together with the leadership of the trade union organisations which sprung up once again immediately the pressure of the Nazis was lifted, offer themselves as hirelings of capital.

The SS found it an impossible task to control Europe. After their experience, the bourgeoisie realises the impossibility of controlling the masses by similar means at this stage of reawakening. They find a ready and willing tool in the shape of the social democratic and Stalinist organisations to dam the revolutionary upsurge of the masses into safe and harmless channels of class collaboration through an even more degenerate form of popular frontism than existed in the past. Thus, they will combine repressions with illusory reforms. Smashing the embryo organs of workers’ rule and disarming the masses, while simultaneously proclaiming their desire for “representative” government and “democratic” liberties. There is no other way whereby they can curb the upsurge of the masses towards the overthrow of the capitalist system. True, the counter-revolution of capital in its early stages, will, within a short period of time following the establishment of military government, assume a “democratic” form. The bourgeoisie will combine the granting of illusory concessions with reprisals and repressions against the revolutionary forces.

*The approaching revolution in Europe can be no other than the proletarian revolution. However, in its early stages it is inevitable that the old organisations of the proletariat should succeed in placing themselves at the head of the masses. The masses will learn only through a new experience, however brief, that these organisations represent the interests of the class enemy. And while absolutely clear on what they do not want, the masses are not clear about the means by which to achieve their ends. Thus, all the factors make for a period of Kerenskyism[87] in the first stages of the revolution in Europe.*

Anglo-American imperialism perceives the inevitability of the fall of Franco and

with its revolutionary disturbances throughout the Iberian Peninsula once Hitler has disappeared from the scene. With the discontent of the masses increasing, Anglo-American imperialism is already negotiating and manoeuvring with sections of the Spanish bourgeoisie, with Franco and with emigre politicians for the purpose of heading off the revolutionary insurrection of the masses. An insurrection in Spain threatens to have too serious effects in the rest of Europe. Hence their search for a Spanish Badoglio[88] to ensure a “safe” and “peaceful” transition from the doomed Franco regime. Whether their efforts are successful or not, the movement of the masses can only be temporarily delayed thereby. However, the serious representatives of finance-capital have learned far more from the experiences of the past decades than the perfidious “leaders” of the working class. To them the problem of transition from one regime to another is determined by how best the interests of the ruling class can be served and safeguarded.

It is clearly impossible for the bourgeoisie of Britain and America to impose an alien totalitarian yoke on the peoples of Europe for any length of time. Especially important in this connection is the role of the Kremlin. While deadly afraid of the victory of the proletarian revolution, the Kremlin is interested in preserving, wherever possible, the maximum freedom of movement for their agencies, the local communist parties. The victory of reaction throughout Europe spells a new and greater danger of imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union on a continental scale. Thus, the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy is that of ensuring the rule of capital, but with the existence of the workers’ movement as a safeguard against the bourgeoisie. The broad mass of the peoples of Europe look towards the Soviet Union as the banner-bearer of socialism. The capitalist democracies for the present, are compelled to reconcile themselves to this factor, and on the basis of the preservation of capitalism in Europe, are willing, and indeed have no other choice than to compromise with the Soviet bureaucracy.

The experience of the Russian revolution, of the German revolution of 1918, of the Spanish revolution of 1931, all reinforce these conclusions. The upsurge of the masses led to the fall of the monarchy in Spain and the proclamation of the Republic by the bourgeoisie. A coalition government of bourgeois republicans and socialists proclaimed radical programmes on paper, while conducting

repressions against workers and peasants. Such a government could not be long lasting. The regime of the Spanish republic was a regime of crises. A period of ebbs and flows, of reaction and radicalisation, culminating finally in half a decade in the bourgeoisie and proletariat attempting to find a solution in sanguinary and desperate civil war.

The Spanish pattern of events will be manifested on an all European scale in the coming period. Backward as well as advanced countries are faced, in some degree or other, with the same crisis. From the Volga to the North Sea, from the Black Sea to the Baltic, nearly all Europe has been reduced to ruins and chaos. A stable basis for bourgeois democracy is thus excluded. Even the relative “stability” of the Spanish republic will not be achieved. The most revolutionary period in European history is heralded by the events in Italy and Greece.

### **The Allied programme for Europe**

The Allied programme for Europe, because of the deeper crisis of capitalism, is far more terrible in its provisions than even the Versailles Treaty. Instead of the forcible unity of one gigantic concentration camp which was the aim of the Nazis, the Allies wish to atomise and split up Europe on the lines which so signally led to catastrophe after the last war. Europe is to become the prey of British and American imperialism, with sections of Europe as satellites of and within the sphere of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Even under capitalist auspices, a united Europe would loom as too formidable a rival and threat for British and American imperialism. The Soviet bureaucracy is unalterably opposed to the prospect of the unification of even part of the continent in capitalist federations, because it would inevitably become the basis for a new war against the Soviet Union in the future. Hence Stalin, together with Truman[89] and Churchill, is committed to the Balkanisation of Europe and the dismemberment of Germany as the only possible formidable foe in a future war

on the continent of Europe.

American imperialism with its huge resources and productive capacity, is driven to attempt the “organisation” of the entire world in an endeavour to escape the consequences of the insoluble contradictions between the capacities and limitations of even the great American market. America seeks to usurp the age-old dominance of Europe – above all of decaying and enfeebled British imperialism – and to grab the markets of the entire world. Not satisfied with the markets of the colonial countries, America wishes to establish a stranglehold on the markets and industries of Europe as well. She wants the dollar to reign over the currencies and economy of Europe. Taking advantage of the chaos and disorganisation of Europe caused by the war, American finance capital hopes to put Europe on rations by means of loans and the weapon of food, supplies and equipment, while simultaneously at moments of stress and turmoil, blackmailing and buying off the revolutions by the same means.

The savagery of Anglo-American imperialism in relation to Germany is dictated not only by the programme of subjugation and exploitation, but by fear of the proletarian revolution in Germany. The German people have had the experience of all the regimes of bourgeois rule within a few decades. The proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie will inevitably turn in the direction of the socialist revolution.

It is in Germany that the bourgeoisie will discover the utopian character of their schemes to retain the old system. All attempts to punish fraternisation will collapse with the occupation of Germany for any length of time. The Tommies and the Doughboys[90] will consider their mission in Europe completed. They will demand demobilisation and a return home to the better world promised them by the bourgeoisie. The struggle of the German proletariat against the occupation forces, against the national humiliation and dismemberment of Germany, the struggle for national and social freedom, will prepare the way, under the very heel of the occupying forces, for a tremendous resistance on the part of the masses.

With their reactionary programme of national enslavement, the Stalinists can hope to bamboozle the German masses for only the briefest of periods. The way is being prepared for a rapid regroupment of forces of the German proletariat in a revolutionary direction. The experience of Italy is an object lesson on how quickly the masses can recover from the effects of terrible defeats under the impact of historic events. The resources and capacity for struggle of the proletariat seem virtually inexhaustible.

The Balkanisation of Germany and Europe, the Anglo-American domination of Western Europe, the claims of France, the domination of Eastern Europe by the Kremlin through bourgeois puppets, will have even more frightful consequences than the “peace” of Versailles on the tortured continent. In the epoch of aeroplanes and panzer divisions, the absurdity of national frontiers, customs barriers and armies, of small and large states in Europe, assumes a particularly baleful character for the slow and painful strangulation of the productive forces and the decline of European culture. Particularly as the great powers – included among which are none of the European powers, for the first time – will bleed all Europe for their own ends. The next stage will become the classic period of the epoch of wars, revolutions and counter-revolutions, deepened and intensified by the history of the past decades.

It is possible, on the basis of the support rendered to world imperialism by Stalinism and classical reformism (and this is one of the objective factors to be reckoned with) that world imperialism can succeed, for a period, in “stabilising” bourgeois democratic regimes in certain countries. Stalinism must offer the masses some gains in the shape of restoration of the trade unions, free (relatively, as in Spain in 1931) press, speech, voting, etc., in however attenuated a form. The imperialists need a “democratic” interlude before taking the road of reaction. Moreover, they have no other choice. The shocks of the war and the debacle of fascism leave no mass basis for reaction in the immediate period ahead. The attempt to set up military dictatorships without social support would be very difficult. Moreover, such regimes could not survive for very long once the British and American troops were compelled to withdraw. The stormy impulsion of the masses compels them to bring forward their reserve weapon in the shape of the labour organisations.

It is possible, on the other hand, that in isolated instances the Anglo-American imperialists and the national bourgeoisie will succeed in immediately introducing military dictatorships. But without a social basis among the masses, these could not be long enduring. On the background of European and world social unrest and clashes such regimes would be faced with crises and convulsions.

Our estimate of the development of events does not mean that we draw pessimistic conclusions. Rather the contrary. But it does demand that the Fourth International utilise the situation in order to prepare for the shocks that await the imperialists. Ours is an epoch of sharp turns. The changes in the situation in Spain following the revolution of 1931[91] developed with tremendous rapidity: upsurge of the masses, sell-out of the reformists, incapacity of the anarcho-syndicalists and Stalinists to give a revolutionary lead (particularly on the democratic and transitional demands); the short period of lull in which reaction prepared its forces to settle with the masses on the basis of disillusionment and despair engendered by their leadership; the masses respond to the whip of the counter-revolution by general strike and insurrection in Asturias and Catalonia; the reaction is unable to consolidate itself; the masses revive, the formation of the People's Front as a bridle for the masses; the February elections; stormy movements of the workers and peasants which the Stalinists and reformists are unable to control; a movement in the direction of the socialist revolution; the July coup of Franco and the answering insurrection of the masses.

Here we have a glimpse of the next period in Europe. The cadres of the Fourth International must study with great care the lessons of these events. To each stage correspond different slogans and tactics, different methods of agitation and propaganda, different actions on the part of the masses.

On this background of crises which extends more or less over the entire continent, spreading across the archaic national boundaries, the objective conditions are created for the establishment of a socialist united states of Europe



as the only solution to the problems which rack every country.

The implications of the war, the struggle of the peoples against Nazi domination, the example of the federation of the USSR, the coming reaction against the Allied domination, the inevitable reaction against nationalist intoxication and chauvinism, the radicalisation of the European masses – all these factors supply also the subjective basis for propaganda for the Socialist United States of Europe to which the masses will respond. As the cord which binds the programme of the Fourth International together, the main strategic slogan will be the united socialist states of Europe as the only alternative to national decay and disintegration, decline of culture and civilisation in all the countries of Europe.

### **Our tasks in Europe**

The Fourth International will penetrate the broad masses and build the party of socialist revolution only with a correct tactical approach to the changing situations and moods.

It would require a whole series of terrible defeats before the bourgeoisie could establish an open dictatorial rule on the lines of the fascist regimes of Hitler and Mussolini. The cycle begins all over again, but on a new basis. The decay of the capitalist system weakens the bourgeoisie and renders it less capable of firmly riveting its rule on the masses. It is 1917-21 with which the world is faced – but on a higher level. The degeneracy of the rotted workers' organisations gives capitalism a breathing space. Only if the series of revolutions fails can the bourgeoisie hope to save its system once again by resorting to a neo-fascism of monstrous reaction and repression. Before then the masses will have been put to the test. The proletariat will discard its old organisations if the Fourth International in its strategy and tactics is capable of integrating itself with the mass movement of the workers.

The basic task in this period is the building of the mass revolutionary parties of the Fourth International. While striving for and advocating the setting up of ad hoc organisations of struggle wherever the opportunity arises, while struggling for and advocating the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only solution, our European comrades cannot hope to achieve this in the first stages of the struggle. True, the masses are seeking the socialist solution; but they will have to go through the experience in action of the policy of betrayal of Stalinism and social democracy in order to learn that even the old standards of life can be obtained only by the rule of the working class.

*The struggle for democratic, economic and transitional demands, far from being superseded or obsolete during the course of the revolutionary epoch ahead, assumes tremendous importance for the building of the framework of our movement. Thus, side by side with the propaganda for soviets and workers' government, at this stage there must be waged an agitation for the old organisations of the workers which still maintain the confidence and support of the masses, to break their alliance with the decadent bourgeoisie and Allied imperialism, and for the leaders to match their words with deeds. Our comrades will demand that the mass organisations which claim to represent the workers, wage a struggle to take power into their own hands. "A government of socialists and communists!" This will be the rallying cry which will be utilised by the Fourth International to mobilise the social democratic and communist workers to wage a struggle against the capitalist class.*

Together, and side by side with this, must go the demand for general elections on the basis of universal suffrage from the age of eighteen years. The bourgeoisie and the reformist organisations are prattling about democratic rights, but they have allowed power to remain in the hands of bourgeois cliques, for the most part under the protection of Allied bayonets, without consulting the masses or receiving a mandate from them. Thus, the demand for a general election and the convening of a constituent assembly must play a great role in the agitation of our comrades in the first stages of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses. Together with these will be linked the transitional slogans in various industries at

varying stages of the struggle: Nationalise the banks without compensation! Take over the mines, railways and big combines and industry, and operate them under workers' control! Expropriate the trusts which yesterday collaborated with Hitler and today collaborate with the Allied imperialists! A plan of public works! A sliding scale of hours and wages! The arming of the workers and the organising of workers' militias! There is no need to detail all the demands which will be put forward, according to the development of the situation as laid down in the policy of the Fourth International in its Transitional programme. These demands are not in contradiction with the programme of soviets, of workers' committees in the factories and streets. But without them there is a danger that the groups of the Fourth International would degenerate into sectarian sterility and isolation. They represent a bridge to the broad masses and without them the problem of organising the vanguard is rendered doubly difficult.

It is in periods such as this that the party of the Fourth International will build itself. The Stalinist and social democratic parties will not attain the stability they achieved in the pre-war era. They will be faced with a constant series of crises and splits. Given correct tactics the parties of the Fourth International will grow at their expense. However, ephemeral, centrist currents and groupings are bound to make their appearance in many countries owing to the weakness of the organisations of the Fourth International and their lack of authoritative spokesmen, such as Leon Trotsky. Authority will be built up on the basis of the ability of the young cadres of the International to learn for themselves in the course of the struggles, and on the basis of the masses' experience of the application of the programme of the Fourth International.

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## Notes

[\[1\] The figure of war dead for the USSR in the Second World War is controversial and most likely will never be determined, but ranges between 20](#)

and 29 million people (military and civilian) according to different researches. The USSR was by far the country which suffered the highest level of casualties in the war.

[2] The statement proposing the dissolution of the Communist International was submitted to all communist parties by the Executive Committee of the Comintern on May 15 1943. The statement resolved “To dissolve the Communist International as a guiding centre of the international labour movement, releasing sections of the Communist International from the obligations ensuing from the constitution and decisions of the Congresses of the Communist International.”

[3] Right wing SPD leaders. Gustav Noske, as minister of war, organised suppression of the January 1919 uprising of the German workers and sanctioned the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht. Philipp Scheidemann became Chancellor in 1919. The Junkers were reactionary Prussian aristocrats who dominated the military and civil service until the 1930s.

[4] The Treaty of Versailles signed in 1919 imposed harsh terms on Germany at the end of the First World War.

[5] Quoted in Trotsky, Stalin, chapter 12, part 2.

[6] From Thermidor: a term used to describe political reaction without a social counter-revolution. Derived from analogy with the shift of power in the French revolution in the month of Thermidor (July) 1794 when the radical Jacobins led

by Robespierre were overthrown by a right wing coup, whilst leaving the fundamental gains of the (capitalist) social revolution intact. Thus Thermidorians: supporters of political reaction in Russia.

[7] Grigori Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev were old Bolsheviks. The former was the first president of the Communist International, the latter was one-time deputy to Lenin. Both were opposed at the time to the Soviet seizure of power in October 1917. After Lenin's death they formed a bloc with Stalin and denied the existence of Lenin's Testament, which called for Stalin's removal as General Secretary. Both were executed in the 1936 Moscow purge trials.

[8] A Russian term for peasant.

[9] This and the following quote were most likely taken from Trotsky, The Revolution Betrayed, chapter 2.

[10] An organisation that brought together the left in the British trade unions in the 1920s. It was initiated and largely led by the Communist Party.

[11] The united front was conceived as a temporary agreement between mass workers' organisations, for action on specific issues, while retaining independence of programmes.

[12] Popular front governments were elected in Spain in February 1936 and in

France in June 1936. As in Spain, the French workers immediately moved into action, occupying factories, establishing workers' committees. In both countries the popular front government acted as a strike breaking force, in Spain opening the way for Franco's fascist uprising in July 1936.

[13] Henri Honoré Giraud (1879–1949) was a French general. Captured by the Germans, he escaped from prison. Although close to the Vichy regime, he joined the Free French Forces and participated with the Allied invasion of North Africa and its subsequent events. Giraud became the de facto head of the French Army of Africa under the shield of the Anglo-American occupation forces.

[14] Nickname inflicted to Mussolini after one of the most important public works endeavoured by the fascist regime in the 1930s to tame the Pontine Marshes.

[15] The strike wave started at the Mirafiori Fiat plant on March 5 1943 and spread like wildfire in Turin, Milan and the industrial heartland of Northern Italy. The revolutionary character of the strikes was well understood by Farinacci, a close collaborator of Mussolini who warned him in a letter: "If they tell you that the movement has taken on a purely economic character, they are lying... The party is absent and powerless. Now incredible things are happening. Everywhere, in the trams, the cafés, the cinemas, the shelters, the trains, people criticise and rail against the regime, running down not just this or that fascist official, but the Duce himself. And the terrible thing is that nobody objects any more. Even the police authorities are absent, as if their job were now useless. We are in for days which may be made more anguished by military events..."

[16] Mussolini was arrested by the Carabinieri on July 25 1943 after a meeting of the Grand Council of Fascism had voted him down and king Victor Emanuel

III had replaced him as the prime minister with marshal Badoglio. As the news of his deposition spread, mass demonstrations erupted throughout the country, political prisoners were set free by the crowds and the most outspoken fascists and hated symbols of the regime were targeted.

[17] King Victor Emanuel III and Badoglio secretly signed the armistice with the Anglo-American forces on September 3 1943 (publicly announced on September 8), which entailed the Italian capitulation terms. To escape from capture by the several divisions of the German army deployed on Italian territory, they cowardly fled to place themselves under the protection of the Anglo-American occupation army based in the south of Italy. Partially taken by surprise, the Italian armed forces disintegrated and disbanded. Those attempting a desperate resistance were rounded up and shot by the German army. All state organs collapsed and the German occupation forces took over the capital and large part of the country.

[18] We have kept the subtitles which were introduced in a 1986 edition of the present article (Bulletin of Marxist studies, spring 1986).

[19] Giacomo Matteotti (1885–1924) was a Socialist Party deputy in the Italian Parliament and one of the leaders of the anti-fascist opposition. His assassination after an attempted kidnapping by fascist thugs in June 1924 raised a wave of protests throughout the country which shook the weak foundation of the yet to be consolidated regime. The opportunity to unsettle Mussolini was lost and he could resort to more repression, resulting in the further consolidation of the dictatorship.

[20] Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia (or Ethiopia) in October 1935 was the first step in his plans for a "Second Roman Empire".

[21] Primo de Rivera took power on the back of a military coup in 1923, but in January 1930 he resigned as the pressure of the masses grew. This, however, did not save King Alfonso XIII who fled into exile following the Socialist and Republican municipal election victory in April 1931, heralding the beginning of the Spanish revolution.

[22] James Burnham (1905–1987) was a philosopher and radical activist in the 1930s and a leader (with Max Schachtman) of the factional struggle within the US Socialist Workers' Party. Burnham and Schachtman denied the degenerated workers' state nature of the USSR. In May 1940 Burnham, who had always denied the philosophy of dialectical materialism, announced his break with Marxism and turned to the political right. His radical break was sanctioned in his most famous work, The Managerial Revolution, published in 1941.

[23] A former LP and ILP Parliamentary candidate, Charles A. Smith met Trotsky on behalf of the ILP in 1933 and publicly supported the ILP coming towards Trotskyism until 1935. Chairman of the ILP in 1939, he shocked the party in 1941 with his resignation and coming out in favour of the British war effort. He then joined the Common Wealth Party and evolved rapidly on radical to anti-communist positions during the Cold War.

[24] This specific claim by the Daily Worker report cannot be confirmed.

[25] Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories: military rule administered by Allied forces during and after World War II within territories they occupied.



[26] Umberto II (1904–1983), was the last King of Italy. He was nicknamed the King of May because he reigned slightly over a month, from May 9 to June 12 1946. Dino Grandi (1895–1988), was a high ranking fascist, minister of justice, minister of foreign affairs and president of Parliament during the fascist regime. On July 24 1943 he took the lead of the anti-Mussolini faction within the Fascist Grand Council which led to the fall of Mussolini.

[27] Fenner Brockway (1888–1988). Along with Maxton was the most prominent leader of the ILP. He opposed the First World War as editor of Labour Leader (then New Leader). With the rise of fascism and the Spanish civil war he renounced his pacifism. He played an important role in supporting the Spanish POUM against Stalinist-led repression and defending their prisoners after the party was made illegal. Defending the ILP from the slander campaign by the British CP he denounced the Stalinist betrayal in the Spanish civil war but refused to support Trotsky's stand against the Moscow Trials.

[28] The military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union (which conferred supreme command) was conferred on five people: veteran Bolshevik Kliment Voroshilov, Alexander Ilyich Yegorov and three senior commanders, Vasily Blyukher, Semyon Budenny and Mikhail Tukhachevsky. Of these, Blyukher, Tukhachevsky and Yegorov were executed during Stalin's great purge of 1937–38, along with thousands of high officers, jeopardising the whole structure of the Red Army just prior to the war. Under the pressure of the military events Timoshenko and Budenny were dismissed. Another marshal, Kulik, was demoted for incompetence, while a number of military commanders were promoted to the supreme command on merit basis.

[29] Outstanding examples of turncoats jumping to the side of Anglo-American imperialism during the Second World War.

[30] The draft can be dated shortly after Churchill's speech at the House of Commons, The surrender of Italy, September 21 1943.

[31] Mussolini was arrested on July 25 1943.

[32] The Allied invasion of Sicily began on the night of July 9 1943.

[33] David Lloyd George (1863–1945) was the head of the British government from 1916 to 1922. Anthony Eden (1897–1977) held numerous posts in the Chamberlain and Churchill governments during the Second World War and was briefly Prime Minister (1955-1957).

[34] We have inserted here this and the above paragraphs which appear as an addendum at the end of the draft but without specification of where they were meant to be inserted.

[35] Winston Churchill, The Second World War, Volume 5, p. 142.

[36] John Anderson (1882–1958) was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer after the unexpected death of his predecessor Sir Kingsley Wood occurred the night before Churchill's speech.

[37] The Moscow conference between the major Allies took place from October 18 to November 11 1943, at the Moscow Kremlin and Spiridonovka Palace.

[38] The 14 points of US president Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)

[39] British diplomat noted for his aversion to Germany.

[40] The Free French Forces led by general Charles de Gaulle were partisans hostile to the Nazi collaborationist French Vichy government. In November 1942, the Anglo-American Allies invaded Vichy-controlled French North Africa, and many Vichy troops surrendered and joined the Free French, with general Henri Giraud at their head. Immediately afterwards the German army occupied France.

[41] The 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine was initially contained by the British civil administration but in late 1937 exploded again as a resistance movement that increasingly targeted British forces. The rebellion was brutally suppressed by the British army and the Palestine police force. According to official British figures covering the whole revolt the army and police killed more than 2,000 Arabs in combat, 108 were hanged and 961 died because of “gang and terrorist activities”, but the real figure for Arab casualties must be significantly higher.

[42] Harry Pollitt (1890–1960) was the General Secretary of the Communist

Party of Great Britain from 1929 to 1956 with a brief interruption between September 1939 and June 1941 when he fell out of Stalin's favour for supporting the entry of Britain in the war despite the Stalin-Hitler pact. He was reinstated after the somersault in Soviet policy caused by the Nazi invasion of the USSR.

[43] The German military forces have been the main hub within which plots to assassinate Hitler were being conceived. All these plots (dating back as early as 1938) aborted because the successes on the ground rallied the vacillating elements in support of the regime. However, by the end of 1942 it became increasingly clear that Germany would be defeated and new plots found a more fertile ground. The most significant attempt was on July 20 1944, when the newly nominated Chief of Staff to general Fromm, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, used his position to plant a bomb in Hitler's Wolfsschanze during a meeting of the General Command. The bomb detonated but Hitler escaped and the subsequent planned military coup collapsed. Most of the conspirators were arrested and executed.

[44] The Comintern had been dissolved by Stalin in May 1943.

[45] The conquest of Cherbourg, Northern France, was achieved by the end of June 1944. It was considered by the Allies of strategical importance for the success in the Battle of Normandy during the Second World War as the deep water port of Cherbourg would have secured the supply chain in support of the Allied invasion armies.

[46] Woodrow Wilson's speech of January 8 1918 declared US aims in the First World War, amongst which were open covenants of peace, freedom of navigation outside territorial waters, removal of economic barriers to free trade, recognition of Russia's right to determine its own institutions, disarmament, a

negotiated settlement of colonial claims involving the colonial peoples, the restoration of Belgium and definition of territorial claims in accordance to the right of nations. The 14 points were subsequently mostly discarded in determining the content of the Treaty of Versailles.

[47] A deliberate reduction of working speed and production by workers, to express their discontent.

[48] On July 20 1944, the newly nominated Chief of Staff to general Fromm, Claus Schenk Graf von Stauffenberg, used his position to plant a bomb in Hitler's Wolfsschanze during a meeting of the General Command. This attempt was part of a broad conspiracy within the German military forces. The bomb detonated but Hitler escaped and the subsequent planned military coup collapsed. Most of the conspirators were arrested and executed.

[49] After the July 20 attack, Hitler ordered all military officers to use the fascist salute, instead of the standard military salute. Up until this time it was optional.

[50] The "Night of the Long Knives" was a purge within the Nazi regime which started on June 30 1934, on the excuse of preventing a putsch by the Sturmabteilung (SA) leader Ernst Röhm. Hitler moved against the paramilitary brownshirts (SA), because he regarded them as a direct threat to his not yet consolidated premiership. While liquidating the SA power, Hitler ordered the murder of several prominent (potential or real) opponents of his leadership within and outside the Nazi Party, thus consolidating his regime. The regime's reaction after the July 20 1944 bombing was similar in violence but could not revive the long gone support for the regime.

[51] Trotsky's assassin, Stalinist agent Ramon Mercader, entered Trotsky's inner circle in Mexico under the forged identity of a Canadian Frank Jacson.

[52] The Outline History of the CPSU by official party historian Nikolai Nikolaevich Popov (1890-1938) was revised at least 16 times to comply with the latest "changes" to party history dictated by Stalin before the author was arrested and shot in the Moscow purge trials.

[53] The episode was reported by eye-witness Maxim Gorky in his Vladimir Lenin, Leningrad 1924, p.28.

[54] Resistance fighters.

[55] Joseph Darnand was a radical anti-Bolshevik and leader of the Milice, a collaborationist militia supporting the Vichy regime that fought against the Resistance. He was executed in 1945.

[56] The death of Ernst Thälmann, leader of the German Communist Party (KPD) and of the chairman of the Social Democrat Party, Rudolf Breitscheid was announced after the Allied bombing of the Buchenwald factories and concentration camp of August 24 1944. While Breitscheid died during the bombing, Thälmann was executed by the Nazis a few days before, on August 18 1944.

[57] John Maclean (1879–1923) was a Scottish revolutionary socialist. His outspoken opposition to the First World War led to his imprisonment. An early supporter of the Russian revolution, he was elected honorary vice-president of the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets and appointed Bolshevik representative in Scotland. The harsh conditions endured while in jail contributed to a general decline of his health and his premature death at the age of 44.

[58] Eugene Debs (1855–1926) was a socialist and a trade union leader, one of the founding members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and several times the candidate of the Socialist Party of America for President of the United States. Debs was jailed in April 1919 for his speeches in opposition to the First World War. His defiance in court and his conduct throughout earned him national and international notoriety.

[59] The draft by Ted Grant was produced for a discussion in the CC of the British Revolutionary Communist Party. On the basis of the discussion a shorter resolution was approved along the same lines on November 11 1944.

[60] This sentence was at the end of the paragraph in a first draft.

[61] This paragraph read in a first draft: “Have the small or big nations of Europe oppressed by the German imperialists yesterday and by the Anglo-Americans tomorrow, the right of self-determination? To pose the question in this manner reveals a confusion of thinking. Undoubtedly revolutionaries are always in favour of the right of self-determination. But today the small and even

the big nations, more than even 25 years ago, are simply satellites and appendages of the big giants striving for world domination. They must fall into the orbit of one or the other great power. Under these conditions there can be no real self-determination except on the basis of a federation of socialist states which can be achieved only by the proletarian revolution.”

[62] Leon Trotsky, Imperialist war and the proletarian world revolution, Manifesto adopted by the emergency conference of the Fourth International, May 19-26 1940.

[63] The population of the small Czech village of Lidice was exterminated in a systematic operation led by SS commander Horst Böhme in June 1942, in reprisal for the killing of Reinhard Heydrich, Reichsprotektor of the Nazi protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, by the Czech resistance. All the men of the village were rounded up and shot, while women and children were deported to be killed later in concentration camps. The village was then set on fire and the ruins levelled. The operation was proudly announced by Nazi media and it immediately became an example of Nazi ruthlessness in the Allied war propaganda.

[64] This was written as an introduction to the RCP’s republication of Trotsky’s Germany – The key to the international situation, November 1931

[65] Towards the end of the war a series of talks took place, one in Quebec (in 1943), between Churchill and Roosevelt on problems which would emerge for imperialism at the end of the war, especially in the Balkans, central Europe and Germany.



[66] Robert Vansittart, head of the Foreign Office, opposed the policy of appeasement towards Hitler, but primarily from an anti-German stance, while paying lip-service to anti-fascism.

[67] Hermann Rauschning was a capitalist who initially supported the Nazis as opponents of the organised working class but then changed his position when the Nazis became out of control, publishing a book, We Never Wanted This. In Nazi Germany a Gauleiter was a district “leader”.

[68] Ernst Thälmann joined the German Communist Party in 1920, he became its leader with Stalin’s support in 1925. Arrested by the Nazis in 1933, he was murdered at Buchenwald in 1944.

[69] Karl Zoergiebel was the Social Democratic commissioner of the Berlin police. Fritz von Papen was appointed Chancellor on June 1 1932. On July 20 he removed the Social Democratic government of Prussia. After the collapse of his government, Von Papen became vice chancellor under Hitler.

[70] Rudolf Breitscheid (1874–1944) was a socialist deputy in the Reichstag. He fled to France when Hitler came to power and was handed over to the Nazis by the Vichy regime. He died at Buchenwald. Vorwaerts was the central organ of the SPD.

[71] Dimitri Manuilsky (1883-1959) was secretary of the Comintern 1931-43.

[72] R. Palme Dutt and William Rust (editor of the Daily Worker from 1939 to 1949) of the British CP and top USSR propagandist during the Second World War Ilya Ehrenburg were prominent Stalinist publicists.

[73] General Ronald Scobie was given command of the III Corps which was sent to Greece from December 11 1943. He remained in command of British forces in Greece until 1946.

[74] Nikolaos Plastiras was the leader of the pro-British National Republican Greek League (EDES), the bourgeois anti-communist wing of the Greek resistance. Tensions grew into open conflict after 1943 between EDES and the main movement of the Greek resistance, the National Liberation Front (Ethniko Apeleftherotiko Metopo, EAM), led by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE).

[75] Baron Pyotr Nikolayevich Wrangel (1878 – 1928) was an officer in the Imperial Russian army and commanding general of the anti-Bolshevik White Army in Southern Russia in the later stages of the Russian Civil War.

[76] The Greek People's Liberation Army, linked to EAM.

[77] William Lawther was the longstanding president of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) and then the National Union of Mineworkers from 1934 to 1954.

[78] The Metaxas regime (also known as the 4th of August regime from the day of the coup), was established by general Ioannis Metaxas with the backing of king Georgios II. Metaxas ruled Greece from 1936 to 1941 drawing inspiration from the Salazar and Franco dictatorships.

[79] Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou (1891–1949) was the archbishop of Athens and all Greece from 1941 until his death. He was also the regent of Greece between the pull-out of the German occupation force in 1944 and the return of King Georgios II to Greece in 1946.

[80] Passed at the RCP conference of August 1945. We include it in this volume because it was written between March and May 1945.

[81] The coalition of Germany, Italy and Japan which originated in 1936.

[82] Napoleon Zervas was the head of EDES (Greek Democratic National League) which while participating in resistance against the Nazis, became a tool of British imperialism and Greek monarchists in the civil war of 1944-49. George Siantos was head of the KKE (Greek Communist Party) 1942-5. Tito (Josip Broz) led the partisan resistance to the occupation of Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav CP broke with Moscow in 1948. The Maquis were the resistance fighters in the provincial areas of occupied France, while the FTP were the CP-led underground operating mainly in urban areas.

[83] The German occupation of Greece collapsed in early October 1944, in the face of a full scale war of liberation waged by the Greek workers and peasants organised in ELAS (Greek National Liberation Army), the military wing of the CP-led EAM (National Liberation Front). British troops were only landed after the German forces had evacuated Athens, with the aim of reestablishing the Greek monarchy and preventing power remaining in the hands of the armed masses. Civil war broke out in December 1944 when the British forces began to disarm ELAS. An armistice was signed in February 1945, but the civil war re-erupted from 1946 until 1949, leaving 158,000 dead.

[84] King George II was king of Greece 1913-24. Restored to the throne in 1935, he made Ioannis Metaxas premier. Metaxas assumed dictatorial powers from 1936-41.

[85] General Nicholas Plastiras of the National Progressive Union became the Prime Minister of the puppet pro-British regime in December 1944. Admiral Vulgaris, Commander of the Greek Fleet, was responsible for crushing an anti-fascist mutiny on ships in Alexandria harbour, April 1944. He took over from Plastiras in April 1945.

[86] In August 1944, the Warsaw workers rose up against the occupying German army. Within two days they controlled the city. However, the Russian army which was within 15 miles of Warsaw, having been checked by the German army, made no attempt to advance for several weeks, leaving the workers to fight alone. Stalin described the rising as a “reckless adventure”, and a “mindless brawl led by adventurers”. After 63 days of heroic resistance, which left 93 per cent of the city destroyed and 240,000 Poles dead, the Nazis regained control. The London Committee was the Polish government in exile from 1940.

[87] From the government of Alexander Kerensky which was in power in Russia from July to October 1917, containing various combinations of reformist and capitalist parties.

[88] Pietro Badoglio, Italian general, became prime minister after Mussolini's fall in 1943. He negotiated an armistice with Allies in Southern Italy, while disarming the workers in the North who had occupied the factories in opposition to the German occupation.

[89] Harry Truman, Democrat president of USA 1945-53. He developed the Truman Doctrine which gave economic and military "aid" to countries threatened with "interference". He introduced the Marshall Plan of economic aid to prevent revolution in Europe in 1948.

[90] Slang terms for British and US soldiers.

[91] The events following begin with municipal elections in April 1931, where a clear victory for the republican parties led to the abdication of King Alfonso. This was followed by a massive strike wave. The insurrection in Asturias took place in October 1934. The Popular Front was elected in February 1936, Franco's fascist uprising took place in July 1936.

## **2. The home front**

# Open letter on repression in Northern Ireland

**January 9 1943**

Dear comrades,

The vicious police regime of Northern Ireland, the most reactionary government in the English speaking countries, has commenced a campaign of victimisation and repression against the Ulster section of Workers' International League (Fourth International).

In conjunction with the Stalinists who have acted as informers and police agents, the capitalists in Ulster have started to drive our comrades out of their jobs. One of our local comrades was driven out of the shipyards at the beginning of November, and blacklisted by the Employers' Federation. He is unable to obtain work despite the "shortage of skilled labour".

On November 29th another of our comrades, Pat McKeivitt was arrested and detained under the Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act[1]. After being held for a week without charge or trial he was escorted to the border and deported into Southern Ireland.

Comrade McKeivitt, who was born in Dublin, is a plumber and was employed by Messrs. Harland and Wolff, shipbuilders at Belfast. He has a fine record of trade union militancy and is well known in Dublin where he was formerly a committee member of the Plumbers', Glaziers' and Domestic Engineers' Union.

On the 3rd January, comrade Bob Armstrong, the leading member of our Irish section was arrested and detained under the same act. Although he is only 30 years old, comrade Armstrong has a record of more than 10 years activity in the British working class movement. Born in Glasgow he served his earliest years in the ILP Guild of Youth before joining the Communist Party in which he spent nearly 6 years. At the beginning of the Spanish civil war, he was one of the earliest members of the British Communist Party to join the International Brigade in which he served with distinction. He left London in August 1936 and was in Spain until the middle of 1938. He was twice wounded in the civil war; left hospital for the front before he was discharged on the first occasion and was put in charge of the International Brigade records at Albacete after his second wound. When he returned to England, although he had already started to question the policy of the Stalinists in Spain he retained his party membership and toured the country as a leading speaker for International Brigade Dependents' Aid Committee. He addressed mass meetings of workers from CP platforms.

As the result of his own political development, he broke from the British Communist Party along with five other members of the Islington branch of the London CP after they had tried to conduct a discussion inside the Party which was refused and blocked by the Stalinist bureaucrats. He, together with his comrades immediately drew the correct conclusions of experiences in the CP and entered the ranks of the Trotskyists. Since that time comrade Armstrong has been one of our most valuable comrades, placing his whole life and experience at the disposal of our movement.

Following his break with Stalinism, the CP, unable to attack his record in public, immediately conducted their usual whispering campaign of slander and lies to undermine his splendid record.

Although the (Special Powers) Act was introduced ostensibly to deal with the IRA, the labour movement in Northern Ireland has consistently fought it and



explained to the workers that it would one day be directed against militant and revolutionaries of the workers' movement.

None of our comrades in Belfast have at any time been members of the IRA, but are Marxists who carry out their activity with the traditional weapons of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, struggling against the petty bourgeois terrorist policy of the IRA and attempting to win the fearless youth of Ireland to the Marxist banner.

These comrades are married men with family obligations. The arrests, victimisation and deportation bring them face to face with actual starvation. Particularly in the case of comrade McKeivitt who will receive no dole or financial assistance in Eire and will find it almost impossible to get work because of the widespread unemployment.

It is an urgent duty of all socialists and worker militants to immediately raise the question among our contacts, friends, in trade union and labour meetings.

*Demand the release of Bob Armstrong.*

Give and collect as much money as possible to keep these comrades and their families during this period. Such monies should be clearly marked, "Belfast Fund" and sent to the Treasurer at 61, Northdown Street, London, N1.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant,

Secretary, WIL

# Coalition cracking Labour to power

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 6, March 1943]

The coalition between the labour movement and the capitalist class is cracking. The cynical indication by the government that it has no intention of carrying through even the modest reforms outlined in the Beveridge Plan[2] has provoked a crisis within the Labour Party.

The Labour ministers, having established “social security” for themselves, do not worry about splitting hairs when the government tosses overboard the demagoguery about “freedom from want” for the masses after the war. They have shamefully accepted the government’s position. The majority of the second layer of the Labour leaders, under the pressure of mass discontent and disillusionment, have been compelled to oppose the government; on this issue and for the first time, the bulk of them voted against the government. Thus we have the farcical situation where the Labour ministers, supported by only two Labour MPs, vote for the government against the overwhelming majority of their party group.

But the gesture of the Labour MPs in voting against the government remains a piece of repulsive hypocrisy and a deception of the working class if they continue to tolerate the Labour ministers remaining in the government. Yet the disgraceful position exists where the Labour MPs agree to allow the coalition to continue on the familiar path of capitulation and surrender to the capitalists. It is reported in the capitalist press that one or more of the Labour ministers has threatened to resign from the Labour Party. This is the MacDonald experience[3]

all over again. Anyone making such ultimatums must be immediately denounced and driven from the labour movement.

## **Widespread movement against Tories**

The ruling class is preparing measures, internally and externally, for an offensive against the working class. The speeches of Churchill and Roosevelt have raised the question once again of the real aims of the war. At home, the masses of the workers, and the middle class also, are becoming more and more critical of the situation in which they find themselves. The ruling class has utilised the war for the purpose of enriching themselves at the expense of the standard of living of the people. All the burdens of the war have been laid on the shoulders of the miners, soldiers, engineers, housewives, small shopkeepers, etc., while the millionaire combines and banks have ruthlessly secured an overwhelming grip on the economy of Britain.

Under these circumstances, the restlessness and disgust of the workers is rapidly turning against the government of big finance. Nearly all the recent bye-elections show a tendency in this direction. In West Belfast, formerly a stronghold of backward Ulster Tory reaction, the Labour Party has won a resounding victory. This is the first Labour MP to be sent to Whitehall from Ulster. In the Midlothian bye-election in Scotland, the Tory candidate only managed to scrape home by a few hundred votes in what was regarded as a safe Tory seat. The Times, organ of big business, reflects the alarm of the ruling class at the tendency throughout the country, and reluctantly comments:

“When every factor has been deducted that may make a bye-election an indecisive index of opinion, such a result as that which the Midlothian electors have lately registered, is still something of a portent.”

It is to meet this steady move towards the left and towards socialism that compelled the government to attempt to by-pass this opposition by announcing the Beveridge scheme as a great scheme for social reconstruction. Despite warnings and efforts to avoid it by all the means in their power, the government had to follow in the footsteps of Lloyd George. His “Land fit for heroes” has once again been pulled out of the drawer of capitalist promises and dusted over, his demagoguery furnished with a new gilding, entitled “Freedom from want for all, social security”, etc.

But immediately Bevin introduced the Catering Bill – meagre and inadequate as it was – to alleviate the horrible sweated conditions in this nightmare industry, the Tories showed their teeth. A substantial number of Tories voted against the government. “National unity” was contemptuously thrown aside even when a modest proposal such as this was placed before them. Their class interests and their right to exploit the workers as much as possible were, as always with the capitalists, their guiding considerations. If the Labour leaders showed only one percent of the class-consciousness of these reactionaries, the future of the workers would be assured.

But the emptiness of all the government’s proposals has been shown by the statement on the Beveridge Report. To quote the pro-government Daily Worker:

“Under the pressure of the most reactionary group of Tories, the government has already partially surrendered to the vested interests opposing Beveridge. No other meaning can be drawn from Sir John Anderson’s speech in the Commons yesterday.”

The Daily Herald stated:

“There is profound dissatisfaction with Sir John’s assertion that although the

government accepts the principles laid down by Beveridge, it is unable at this stage to enter into any specific commitments.”

So that the brave new world they promised, of which they have now given a glimpse, is nothing but the same old world – only worse. The same as the “good old days” after the last war: means test[4], unemployment misery and want for the working class. Even the carrying through of the Beveridge Report itself would not alter this in any way. But the capitalists and their government are showing already that the Beveridge Report was not meant seriously. Sir John Anderson and Kingsley Wood have demonstrated quite crudely and brutally that this scheme was purely meant as a fairy tale to keep the masses quiet.

Says the Times on the government position:

“The government’s acceptance ‘in principle’ of a very large part of the report has been presented with so many conditions and qualifications as to leave the impression that action, in their view, is only vaguely desirable, that it may be postponed for years, or may even be deferred altogether in a coming era of poverty and depression.”

Thus the Times, most authoritative journal of British capitalism, sums up the government’s position as it “appears” to be. Of course, the alarm of the Times is merely voiced at the indiscretion of the government revealing the brutal truth of the position of British capitalism too soon.

They realise what the reaction among the masses will be, as the bye-elections have already shown. It is in this atmosphere that the Labour MPs, faced with the pressure of the workers, have threatened a “revolt” against the government.

That is the position with regard to home politics. So far as foreign politics is concerned, Lord Beaverbrook has shown the miserable trickle of “aid” and supplies which have been sent to the Soviet Union. The capitalist class and the government are looking with hidden fear and trembling at the advance of the heroic Red Army. In India and the colonies, the rule of blood and terror, of force and famine, is being imposed on the masses of the people. In “liberating” Tunis from the Axis, the armies of British and American imperialism are using just as inhuman and brutal methods against the Arabs, as the Axis uses in Europe. The whole of the capitalist press fanned the justified indignation of the masses at the destruction of Lidice in Czechoslovakia, and of other towns in occupied Europe. Yet a report published in the Daily Telegraph reveals that British troops are burning and destroying villages, seizing the inhabitants’ cattle, and driving them from their former homes. This is a picture of the regime which they intend establishing in Europe and Asia, when they have been “liberated” from the iron grip of German and Japanese imperialism. The farce of the “war against fascism” has been exposed in North Africa by the installation into power of the French fascist quislings[5].

The capitalists are planning ahead both for the struggle against the peoples of Europe and the workers of Britain. They offer a future of hunger and chaos, of quislings in Europe and Asia, and inevitably of reaction and fascism at home. The working class must plan ahead as well. The Labour leaders have been holding the masses in check with the fiction of “national unity”. But even the Times can see that the workers want an alternative to the rotten system of capitalism. In undisguised dismay they watch the barometer of the bye-elections.

The Labour Members of Parliament have been forced into opposition over the refusal of the government even to pay lip service to the Beveridge Plan. This is not enough! Speeches in Parliament cost nothing but hot air! The time has come to act!

The bulk of the workers in the labour movement support the Labour leaders because they believe that they represent their interests. The Labour leaders have

entered the government with the cry that it was necessary for a struggle against fascism. Sacrifices must be made, they said. But only the masses, not the capitalists have made the sacrifices! Sacrifices for the workers, profits for the bosses! Now even the miserably inadequate Beveridge Plan is not even to be promised. It goes too far for the Tories.

If the Labour leaders desired power it is theirs for the taking. A campaign throughout the country on a militant socialist programme would force a general election. And a general election under these conditions would give the Labour Party an overwhelming majority. It is time for the farce of “national unity” to be ended. End the coalition with the capitalists – Labour must take power! No more compromises, no more sell-outs by the Labour and trade union leaders to the bosses.

Workers’ International League believes that only the taking of power by the working class can solve their problems. But the road to this lies through the independent struggle of the working class. We believe that the Labour leaders do not represent the interests of the workers, but since the masses of the workers still have confidence in these leaders, we will fight side by side with them to convince them that our point of view is correct. But the whole course of the war has shown the rottenness and bankruptcy of the coalition. The next step forward is the reassertion of the demand that the Labour leaders fight for power.

Workers, members of trade unions, Labour parties, co-ops and the whole labour movement, the time has come to exert pressure now. We appeal to you – don’t put your trust in the capitalists and their politicians. Watch the actions of your own leaders. Rely on your own strength, your own forces, your own organisations. Only the working class can solve the problems facing the workers. End the coalition! Labour to power! Put into force the programme of the Socialist Appeal, which will lead the workers to victory.



# **The Beveridge Report**

## **A directive to members**

**By WIL Political Bureau**

March 1943

In dealing with the Beveridge Report our comrades must be crystal clear on how to approach the problem. It would be criminal on our part to create the slightest illusion in the minds of the workers regarding Beveridge, and in particular regarding our attitude towards it.

Because of the broad popular support which has been created in the ranks of the workers for the Beveridge Plan as the result of the skilful newspaper propaganda, aided by the workers' press, and by the illusions created in the minds of the workers as the result of the right wing opposition in Parliament and their refusal to legislate it, our comrades can easily slip into a position of critical support for the Beveridge Plan, and not make our principled position clear. The grave danger is, that as the result of the opposition of big business, the main weight of the discussions in the labour movement will centre around this question, and it is our task to continually strive to bring the discussions back to a principled plane. Even the more advanced workers have some illusions on the "Plan", and despite their scepticism, are easily confused unless the clear alternative is posed. They regard the Plan as a "lesser evil".

Our whole perspective of crisis for British imperialism and coming tremendous class struggles, teaches us to place the Beveridge Plan in its correct relationship in the economic and political life of the nation.

In the first place, only the petty capitalists and their reformist allies believe that it can be implemented. The genuinely conscious representatives of big business know better and are scientifically correct, as capitalist economists, in their arguments against the Plan. The Beveridge scheme is utopian and if it were introduced into the Statute Books as the result of a radical upsurge, and even partially operated, it could only be for a short duration when the position of British capitalism would engender crisis and collapse.

Seen in perspective, the Plan is in the nature of a vent for the energy and revolutionary ideas of the workers, and thus acts as a red herring to distract the minds of the workers away from revolutionary socialist measures as the basis of social security.

The following directive is issued in the attempt to establish for our comrades the correct and concrete method of tackling the problem when it comes up for discussion, and to clearly establish our position as against that of the reformists.

1. The Beveridge Plan is a miserable reform with a number of reactionary features.
2. Our general attitude towards the Plan is determined by this characterisation.
3. The weight of our argument is thrown into exposing the Beveridge Plan rather than opposing it.

4. Our task is to explain the limitations of the Plan its reactionary characteristics; the difficulties and indeed, the impossibility of putting it into operation with the best will in the world on the part of the ruling class to explain that in the event of a political crisis that puts Labour into power, or a left coalition pledged to operate the Plan, that the financial guarantees would be undermined by inflation which the big business executives would inevitably introduce.

5. The primary reason for its introduction at this stage is to sidetrack the inevitable revolutionary upsurge of the masses, who will demand radical changes in the social and economic structure of the nation, into the blind alley of reformism.

6. From this flows the necessity to oppose the Labour and trade union leadership who present Beveridge as a panacea for social security after the war, and to counterpose our own demands that Labour break the coalition and fight for power on the basis of our socialist programme. We demonstrate that, by limiting the demands of the workers to Beveridge, the policy of the leadership of the Labour movement is a policy of betrayal. That this policy must inevitably lead to the disillusionment of the mass of the workers and lower middle class and that it must therefore strengthen reaction and lead to fascism in Britain.

7. In the trade union and Labour movement, our attitude towards Beveridge will be determined by the character of the resolution.

If it proposes to endorse the attitude of the National Council of Labour, the TUC, or the Co-op leadership towards the Beveridge scheme, we oppose the resolution and present an amendment demanding that Labour break the coalition and fight for power on a socialist programme as the only basis for social security. We vote against the original resolution in the event of our amendment not being carried, and thus demonstrate our principled opposition to the policy of betrayal.

If the resolution demands the immediate implementing of Beveridge and calls upon the Labour leaders to fight for its immediate and unconditional legislation, we put an amendment as before, and in the event of this falling, we put a second amendment demanding that Labour break the coalition to implement Beveridge, again explaining and emphasising our attitude towards the plan, and pointing out to the workers that if they seriously believe that it will partially solve their problem, then they have no alternative but to take this step. We would explain that without a directive as to how the Beveridge scheme could be implemented, i.e. by breaking with big business and conducting a struggle against it, the resolution was a farce. We would explain that if this was carried out we would give full support to the Labour Party against the reactionaries. But all the time we counterpose our own programme and thus, demonstrate to the workers in their own experience that the Beveridge scheme is incapable of solving the problem of social security, and teach them that the only alternative is the socialist revolution.

If this amendment was carried – to break the truce to implement Beveridge – we would vote for the resolution. But if our amendment fell, we would vote against the original resolution.

8. The question of our attitude in Parliament is not a practical one for us at this stage but it has a certain theoretical value. We would expose the meagreness of the proposed reform and its reactionary features, and explain why it is being introduced at this stage. We would demonstrate the soundness and the correctness of the reactionary opposition's argument from the capitalists' point of view as the result of Britain's position in the world market. We would demonstrate from this that socialism is the only basis for social security. We would expose the reactionary attitude of the parliamentary reformists in accepting this Plan as the basis for social security, and clearly state that this attitude was a betrayal and that they were preparing to conduct a shadow fight with the ruling class around the question of Beveridge, instead of demanding large scale socialist measures as the basis for social security. We would then call upon the Labour leaders in Parliament to break the coalition and fight for power

on our programme as the only basis for social security.

Having made our political attitude crystal clear, we would vote for the immediate implementing of the Beveridge scheme with the reformists and against the reactionaries.

9. The difference between our attitude in the working class organisations and in Parliament arises from the class character of the two institutions. In the labour movement there is no question of voting with the reactionaries when we vote against the Beveridge scheme, or the fakers who wish to limit the struggles of the working class to Beveridge. The full weight of our argument would be levelled against the Labour leaders for their policy of betrayal and our principled attitude demonstrated clearly and decisively in what we say; it must be emphasised by our vote which is against all false resolutions on the question. In Parliament our political case is identical, but the emphasis is thrown on the attack against capitalism, because of its hostility towards even this miserable reform and its inability to grant the workers even a minimum measure of social security. From this flows our criticism of the Parliamentary Labour Party for not decisively breaking with the capitalists and calling upon the workers to introduce a Labour government with large scale socialist measures as the only basis for social security and thereby, as the result of their sparring with the capitalists over the question of utopian and miserable reforms, misleading the workers and crippling their class basis of activity. Our vote would go with the reformists against the reactionaries so that our class position and hostility to capitalism would be harmonised with throwing the maximum weight for legislated reforms.

# ILP conference and tasks of the left

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 9, Mid-April 1943]

This year marks the Jubilee conference of the Independent Labour Party. It is a suitable time to draw a balance sheet for the past, the present, and the future of the ILP.

Fifty years ago the formation of the ILP marked the first step on the road of independent class politics for the British working class. It marked the emergence of the working class from the position of slavish dependence on the traditional parties of British capitalism, onto the road of reliance upon their own class forces, organisations and class solidarity, politically as well as industrially to achieve their aims. In this sense the workers' movement of the present day can look back with respect and pride to the pioneers of the workers' movement of the past. It is the imperishable achievements of the formation of the independent class party of the working class that the workers' movement and rights are based on at the present time.

*But while appreciating the achievements of the pioneers it is absolutely necessary for those who claim to stand on the basis of Marxism, to understand the limitations and the defects of the old pioneers.*

The ILP was organised not on the basis of scientific socialism, but on the basis

of reformism. The ILP founders never correctly understood the problems posed by capitalism nor the revolutionary socialist solution which alone could lead to its overthrow.

At the dawn of the development of the ILP these immature ideas were reflected in their programme of gradual evolution of the capitalist system through a series of reforms into socialism. The whole vacillating and equivocal character of the leadership of the ILP can be seen in the fact that at the Jubilee conference[6] they have not taken the opportunity to settle accounts with the reformist past of the ILP and explain its development to what they call its revolutionary socialist position. To a genuine revolutionary leadership this would have been an elementary duty, one moreover which far from implying disrespect to the past of the party, would on the contrary, have been the best tribute to those sincere but unclear and confused socialists who founded the ILP. Not only that. It could have been a means of educating the membership and raising its consciousness to a higher level, preparing it in this way for the tasks which urgently face the workers at the present time. Instead of that, the history of the ILP is presented as being one unbroken policy from the time of its foundation.

From their point of view, the leadership is correct in letting the dead bury the dead, for in the last analysis, they remain true to the tradition of the ILP – they are at best the left flank of reformism and nothing else. They remain organic centrists, the majority of whom, tomorrow, under the pressure of events can find their way back to the reformist fold.

The ILP formerly reflected and approximated to the immaturity of the labour movement in a period when capitalism could still afford grudging reforms to the working class. Especially in Britain today we are living under the shadow of imperialist degeneration and decay. The very organisations which were built up in just a few decades as the bulwarks of workers' democracy and workers' rights are threatened with destruction and disintegration in the next period ahead if they do not transform themselves into fighting organisations of the working class, striving for and capable of achieving the conquest of power. For this purpose

they need a guiding organisation and leadership – a revolutionary party – entirely different to the theoretical basis and organisation of the ILP. For the epoch of wars and revolutions we need a party and a leadership to correspond to the tasks. Not a party of reformism like that of the old ILP but a party of revolution. The ILP, in the methods and ideas of the leadership, remains far closer to the former than the latter.

### **Talism – not foresight**

The resolutions at this conference formulated under the influence of the trends of development of mass consciousness and the pressure of Marxist criticism and of the left wing of the ILP show a marked turn to the left – on the surface at any rate. An examination of the New Leader of the last few weeks indicates that, so far as the leadership is concerned, the change is only superficial.

However the change from the conference last year to the present one, is striking. This conference marks the burial of the “Socialist Britain Now” policy. Except in an occasional phrase, the policy is abandoned as it has been proved fruitless and barren. In the basic resolutions of the NAC[7] to the conference not even a reference is made to it. Like the numerous Stalinist adventures of a similar character, it has been unable to win the masses and no explanation or discussion on the reasons for the failure has taken place. This is not the Marxian method of changing policy by an honest examination and criticism, thus arriving at an understanding of mistakes made, guaranteeing that the same mistakes will not be made in future and that the new policy will be put forward on a firm basis. The abandonment of this tactic and the turn towards the Labour Party is a vindication of Marxist criticism. But alas! As always with centrists, the wheel has turned full circle, from a sectarian-opportunist position the ILP has advanced to a full-blown opportunist one.

At the last conference a resolution was proposed which advocated that the ILP



propose Labour should break the coalition and fight for power on a socialist programme[8]. This resolution, which was fundamentally correct, formulated a transitional policy aimed at educating the Labour Party workers to independent class consciousness, exposing the role of the Labour leaders and winning the organised workers to the banner of the ILP. The leadership painted a picture of the horrible consequences that would follow from putting forward the Labour to power tactic. It would sow illusions in the minds of the workers that the Labour leaders were or could become socialists; on the basis of their experience of the Labour leaders it would disillusion the masses in socialism altogether and prepare the way for fascism. It was sheer opportunism – ran their arguments – to put forward such a policy. Meanwhile of course, this did not prevent the ILP leadership in actual practice from being shameless opportunists who failed to conduct any real struggle against the trade union and Labour bureaucracy. To this day the ILP has not anywhere put up a candidate at a by-election against the Labour Party. The leadership has shed its sectarian mask of last year and openly comes forward – with an opportunist position! In true centrist fashion they have stumbled blindly into the very morass into which they warned the policy of the left wing would lead. The distorted caricature of the policy which they tried to foist onto the revolutionary socialists on this question they have now adopted as their own. Except perhaps that they give it a more vulgar expression.

Our task is now to try and educate the best members of the working class as to the real basis of this policy.

Lenin's formulation, and our formulation of the problem leave not a single unclear phrase behind which not only sectarianism but opportunism could find shelter. Look through all our articles for the past two years in which we criticise the position of the ILP or our positive formulation in the Socialist Appeal and there is not the slightest ambiguity or doubt in our attitude towards the Labour and trade union bureaucracy. It will suffice here if we quote Marc Loris, since his article aroused such an indignant protest on the part of Padley, one of the leaders of the ILP[9].

“The Labourite leaders cynically collaborate with the Tories in order to bring the imperialist war to a successful conclusion. The English workers feel more and more ill at ease, but are still organised in the Labour Party. How [to] get out of this impasse? How [to] take a step forward?

“To this fundamental question, point of departure of all the problems of the English revolution, the leaders of the ILP bring no answer. By this they betray the purely abstract character of their propaganda.

“How would a Leninist leadership approach this task? It would address itself to the members of the Labour Party saying: ‘End the political truce! Break with the representatives of capitalism! Labour to power!’ Here is the programme we propose for a Labour government. And the revolutionary leadership would present a series of fundamental demands.” (Socialist Appeal, July 1942)

But, the new orientation is even more dangerous to the socialist revolution than the previous sectarian position of the ILP. Not content with the position adopted by the membership despite their opposition last year, the ILP leadership wish to “improve” on it. The basic resolution presented by the NAC says in connection with the truce:

“Similarly, in colonial and foreign affairs an aggressive imperialist policy has been pursued, gravely compromising the Labour Party. The Labour leadership has become subservient to the ruling class and socialist principles have been betrayed.”

The imperialist policy of the Labour leadership would come as no surprise to a Marxist. The first and second Labour governments pursued, as ruthless, if not an even more ruthless imperialist policy than their Tory predecessors. But it is clear that the moment the reformist leaders under the pressure of the masses take a

step to the left and beckon with their little finger, then the ILP leadership makes haste to abandon all pretence of revolutionary intransigence and rush to the side of the union bureaucracy. Evil tongues would have it that behind the scenes the centrist leadership of the ILP, without consulting or acquainting the membership with the fact, has been negotiating with the Labour bureaucracy on what terms they could secure re-affiliation to the Labour Party. This would be in accordance with the usual back-stage manoeuvres and horse dealings of centrism with reformism. However, whatever may or may not be the truth behind this rumour, there certainly seems to be some fire behind the smoke in this case. The resolution of the NAC says:

“In the event of the Labour Party breaking the political truce, the NAC will immediately call a special conference of the ILP to discuss our relations with the Labour Party.”

Not that the question of affiliation to the Labour Party under all conditions would be a bad thing. The question of affiliation or non-affiliation is not a principled question for revolutionaries but a question of tactics. Indeed Trotsky some time before the war even gave the advice to the ILP to attempt to re-affiliate to the Labour Party. But what is at issue is method. A revolutionary organisation could affiliate and would affiliate to the Labour Party as the mass expression of the workers in Britain, even if the Labour leadership in Britain refused to break the political truce. On condition that they possessed the full democratic right of criticism of the leadership and of the policy, and had the opportunity of convincing the workers of the correctness of their point of view. Whether the truce is broken or whether the leadership openly, instead of in a disguised way, support the capitalist class, the character of the Labour leadership does not change thereby: they remain agents and tools of the capitalists, in the classical phrase, labour lieutenants of the capitalist class.

In fact that most difficult part of the task of revolutionary leadership comes precisely – not in a period when the leadership is blatantly collaborating with the capitalists, but precisely in the period when they are in “opposition”. The task of

exposing the leadership under these conditions is both delicate and beset with difficulties. Relentless criticism and exposure of the leadership is a vital necessity if the masses are not to be misled into the swamp of reformism. This, the ILP leadership cannot and will not do! The ending of the truce between the Tories and Labour would mark the end of the truce between Labour and the ILP, in military terminology on terms of “unconditional surrender” to reformism. The ILP leadership, with a sigh of relief would enter the Labour Party, there, from the point of view of the Labour bureaucracy, to act as a useful left shield against the inroads of Stalinism or revolutionary socialism and against any attempt of the masses to break away and turn to revolutionary politics.

In the last year or two even the Labour leadership has become aware of the widespread disillusionment among millions of workers in Labour politics and of the instinctive drift towards “communism” not necessarily in the shape of the Stalinist caricature – towards which large sections of the workers are already tending. There is a danger for the Labour leaders that under the impact of events, the masses would rapidly break away organisationally and politically from the Labour leadership and the Labour Party. The ILP, they calculate cynically enough, by its stand on the war and all other questions in the present period has not tarnished or spoiled its reputation among the masses. On the background of Labour and Stalinist betrayal it cannot but appear honest and sincere to the rank-and-file supporter of the Labour Party. What a fine conductor for the inevitable anger and indignation of the masses at the policy of the Labour leadership! And what is more, as tame and harmless as a pet squirrel without teeth, whose bite cannot really hurt. The revolutionary elements within the ILP must realise that so far as the basic leadership of the party is concerned this characterisation remains fundamentally correct. Very little separates the centrism of the parliamentary coterie of the ILP from at best left-reformism. George Buchanan, with the blessing and good will of the ILP leadership, made the transition from “revolutionary” ILP-ism to reformism without bursting any blood vessels and without any more trouble or qualms than it takes to transfer from train travel to motor coach. This desertion could happen in any party, but what is striking was the good wishes and congratulations with which he departed.[10]

On dozens and dozens of occasions – one can say without exaggeration at almost

every session in Parliament – the ILP MPs and following them, the NAC has underlined the reformism of the leadership.

One recent example of this provides an annihilating indictment. In the February 13th issue of the New Leader on the front page in the most prominent position under the bold heading, Maxton flays the Tories, appeared the following extract from Maxton's speech[11]:

“I should be happier if I saw more Conservative members showing signs of getting rid of their mean-spirited attitude towards the working class. I have pointed this out before, but no Conservative believes it. I know Conservatives in this House. In their personal relations they are kindly, generous and decent... throughout my life I have hated to see people poorer than myself, and every decent Conservative would hate it, too... Why not start now, in the middle of the war, and say: ‘We will wipe out now all the obvious unfairness and injustices that there are’.”

Here in these few sentences is comprised the whole essence of the ILP! Just as a scientist can construct and understand the whole structure of a prehistoric animal by a few bones, so a Marxist, from a few sentences such as these can see revealed the whole structure and policy of the party. It is positively embarrassing to have to deal with such a speech. Maxton claims to stand for revolutionary socialism. Yet instead of calling on the workers to rouse their revolutionary indignation and systematically develop and deepen the progressive hatred of the exploited for the exploiters, he appeals to good sense and kindness to ameliorate the hatred of the oppressors for the oppressed! No person could have made a worse speech dripping with nauseating and reactionary sentimentality. Just think of it! This speech was made on the background of the bloodiest war in history to a ruling class soaked in centuries of violence and deceit of the enslaved. It would be as sensible to lecture the keeper of a brothel to be more kind and humane to his victims because in his personal relations to his wife and family he preserved the moral code.

But Brockway, the real theoretician and leader of the ILP, printed this rubbish which would disgrace the pages even of a reformist newspaper, not only without protest, but with full publicity and approval. Such is the ILP. If this is the attitude to the capitalist enemy, it would of course be absurd to expect a better attitude in regard to reformism. The ILP in the past may have used a few radical phrases but they neither analysed nor understood reformism.

John McNair[12], general secretary of the ILP puts the “new” policy in the March 13th issue of the New Leader. Just as Maxton is convinced of the “good intentions” of the capitalists, so John McNair is convinced of the good intentions of their agents within the ranks of the working class.

“I am firmly convinced that when Labour entered the government it was with the best intentions.”

There is an old saying that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Certainly the leadership of the ILP is well established on that road. For Marxists, the problem does not consist in measuring the “sincerity” of people or parties, but the objective results of their policies. As Lenin explained many times, no one has yet invented a sincerometer.

For the next period the attitude towards the Labour Party and reformism will be one of the key questions for the ILP and the revolutionary elements within it. That is why we have dealt with this question so extensively. But on all the other fundamental questions facing the working class, the position of the ILP is no different.

**India**

On the question of India, to which in a large extent is bound the fate of the British working class, the NAC resolution presented at this conference has taken the most radical departure in its history. This too reflects the pressure of the revolutionary elements in the ILP. But even now they are far from approaching the Marxist solution to the problem. For the first time the ILP abandons its uncritical support for the leadership of the National Congress in India and discovers that “an influential section of the Congress Party is anti-socialist in outlook and may be expected to enter into agreements with British or any other imperialism...”

Compared to other parties and organisations within the working class, the ILP takes a courageous stand in demanding unconditional freedom and independence of India from British imperialism. But the success of the social revolution cannot be obtained merely from a position which is better than that of social patriotism or Stalinism. The position of the ILP, after all, remains that of platonic sympathy with the Indian and colonial peoples. A revolutionary internationalist position demands the methods and policies of Bolshevism. From this the ILP is as far as it is in its policy at home. Having timidly taken the step of criticising Congress for the first time, the ILP leaders miss the whole essence of the problem of colonial liberation. “The passion for national independence has tended to obscure fundamental class divisions and the need for socialist revolution and reconstruction.” On the contrary, the “passion for national independence”, that is, the intense hatred for the foreign imperialist oppressor is the best cement that the socialist revolution could have. It is not in their “passion for national independence” that consists the treachery of Congress, but precisely the fact that because of their own connections with the foreign capitalists, the banks and landlords and moneylenders in India, the Congress leaders are incapable of waging a real struggle against British imperialism.

The overthrow of British imperialism would require the mobilisation and organisation, the moving into action of millions of peasants and workers. But the entry into the arena of action of the masses would spell a mortal danger to the Indian landlords and capitalists and that is the reason why Congress has betrayed the mass struggle in the past on each occasion – when it reached a crisis; that is why in the future they must attempt to arrive at a compromise with imperialism.

Only the Indian working class can lead a consistent and unwavering struggle against British imperialism to the end. For the achievement of the democratic revolution and national independence the Indian masses need the leadership of the proletariat. But the proletariat, in its turn, cannot lead the struggle without a far-sighted vanguard at its head. Such a vanguard could only be organised in a revolutionary socialist party armed with the knowledge and understanding of the experience of the Russian and Chinese revolutions. The primary task of British revolutionary socialists consists in aiding and helping in the organisation of such a party in India.

## **Beveridge**

On the Beveridge report the cloven hoof of reformism is revealed again. John McGovern in Parliament succeeded in disgracing himself and his party, as usual:

“If this House departs at the end of the debate without giving some definite instruction to the government, we shall have failed in our mission, we shall have done the very worst day’s work we ever did for democracy in this country, and we shall fall to an even lower stage in the contempt of the people... I am afraid that at the end of this war there is the danger that the military struggle will be followed by civil war, because men will be roused to such a pitch that they will take matters into their own hands... Let the government make a great human gesture and announce before this debate is ended, a new charter for old age pensioners.”

So it is always with the ILP MPs. They never miss an opportunity to try and “reason” with the capitalists, showing them the “dangers” which face them, as the result of their bad actions. McGovern and his friends are wasting their time. The imperialists understand the position better than they do. It should be his job



not to warn the capitalists but to prepare the workers.

The resolution at this conference on Beveridge lacks clarity and is ambiguous. Some parts are quite good but the value of these are destroyed by the combination of opportunist with radical phrases. The main task of revolutionaries in relation to the Beveridge report is to expose its inadequacy and the impossibility of capitalism giving even these meagre reforms. Instead of “congratulating the Labour Party” in voting against the government on this question, it would have been more to the point to demand consistency on their part; that is, to fight for the scheme if they believed, as they said, it would solve the problem of social security. At the same time pointing out that the scheme was quite impossible – meagre as it might be – under capitalism, which could not afford even these miserable concessions.

## **Internationalism**

This conference is noteworthy not only for what is to be discussed, but for what is not to be discussed. The question of international relations is conspicuously absent from the agenda. No doubt the leadership has good reasons of its own to avoid a discussion on this question, for inevitably it would raise the question of the International. This is a fundamental issue which directly affects not only the British working class, but the revolution in Europe and the fate of the world working class. The problem should really be a simple one of elementary Marxism. The Second International has betrayed the workers; the Third has long degenerated into an agency of Stalinist foreign policy without even a trace of the revolutionary purpose for which it was founded by Lenin. Both internationals, even in the eyes of the ILP leadership, are bankrupt and responsible for the debacle of the workers’ movement and the advance of fascism on the continent of Europe. What then to do? Revolutionary internationalism would immediately indicate the way, and prepare to lay down the foundations of a new international, irreconcilably opposed to the reformist and Stalinist distortions of Marxism. Such an international would be based on the achievements of the previous internationals, and founded on the tested principles of Marx and Lenin.

That is the conception which led to the foundation of the Fourth International. Brockway has been writing a series of articles on this question in the New Leader. In the issue of March 13 1943, Brockway says:

“That international will rise from the socialist revolution in Europe to which we can look confidently in this period of history. It will throw up its own organisation and leaders...There is little value in formulating the programme of this resurgence. It will create its own...”

It would be difficult in a few lines to make more blunders than this. There is a whole world philosophy comprised here and its name is centrism. True enough that the socialist revolution and new leaders and organisations in Europe will arise like a phoenix from the ashes of the old outlived organisations destroyed by fascism. But has history then no lessons for us? Especially Brockway condemns reformism and Stalinism but has not understood the real basis of these organisations. How else could he write so light-mindedly of the revolution automatically solving its own problems? The last world war saw a chain of revolutions unleashed by the working class. All were defeated except one – the Russian revolution. Since then further revolutions and upsurges on the part of the workers have taken place in numerous countries. All have ended in disaster. Alas, the revolution by and of itself solves nothing. Brockway should have learned something from Spain. The POUM[13] brother party of the ILP, by their policy in being unable to face up to the Stalinists, were partly responsible for the defeat of the Spanish revolution – and not without the assistance of the ILP which approved and supported their false policies.

If Brockway had learned from the defeats, he could not have made the statement that the movement will automatically create its own programme. What need then for a party or an international at all? No, comrade Brockway. Revolutions may make programmes, but only the programme of Bolshevism can make a successful socialist revolution. That is the lesson of the past decades. What would we think of a general staff which prepared for war by announcing that it

was not interested in problems of strategy and tactics? And that the war would automatically create the organisation of the army and its own strategy and tactics? We could only conclude that they did not understand the ABC of military science and were not fit to command a regiment, let alone an army. True enough, all the details of war cannot be laid down in advance, but the broad principles apply in every war. So it is in politics. Of what use is the science of socialism – Marxism – if we cannot lay down the broad principles and programme in advance of great events? The whole history of the past century and the writings of the great teachers would have been in vain.

The revolutions will be successful on the tested theories of Bolshevism or they will fail. In that is summed up the meaning of the Fourth International. It is not a question of setting up a new international because of a dislike for the Second and Third, but of building on the granite foundations of Marx and Lenin which led to the successful revolution. It is that precious historical heritage which is preserved by the Fourth International for the benefit of coming revolutions and the new generation.

## **Soviet Union**

On the question of the Soviet Union the ILP persists in its ambiguous position. They have neither explained theoretically nor practically how the Stalin regime is to be dealt with. They take the correct position that the Soviet Union is a workers' state and must be defended. But alternately they hysterically denounce the crimes of Stalin, or picture the achievements of planned economy and the military victories as emanating from the Stalinist leadership. Says Brockway, dealing with Stalin's murder of the Polish Jewish socialists, Alter and Ehrlich[14]:

“The explanation of the ugly features of the Russian regime, tragically spoiling its great achievements in human welfare and happiness, has largely been fear of

enemies to its socialist basis, within and without.” (New Leader, April 10 1943)

This may have been true of the regime under Lenin, but it is definitely false under the regime of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Or does Brockway believe that the murder of the old Bolsheviks, of the commanders of the Red Army, of Trotsky, or of these Polish-Jewish socialists was necessary because they threatened the socialist basis of the Soviet Union? Merely to pose the question, is to answer it. Lenin and Trotsky defended the socialist basis of the USSR. Stalin defends the privileges of the bureaucracy. This in its turn poses inevitably, squarely in front of the working class and of the international socialist movement, the problem of a political revolution in Russia and the forcible overthrow of the bureaucracy.

### **CP-LP affiliation**

The kicks, insults and slanders of the Stalinists have reluctantly compelled the ILP leadership to launch a retaliatory campaign of exposure of the CP since the last conference. Not without the assistance of the pressure of the indignant membership, of course. However, we would seek in vain for a principled position on the CP. The leadership prefers, as on their attitude to the international, passive waiting and adaptation to events. At the present time and for the past months the Communist Party has been running a tremendous campaign for affiliation to the Labour Party. The CP has secured a large volume of support within the trade union and labour movement for the proposal. The subject has been commented on extensively in the national capitalist and Labour press. The Labour Party executive and the Daily Herald have been compelled to wage a counter-campaign in order to frustrate the Stalinist attempt. What is the position of the ILP? Are they for or against affiliation? What is their attitude?

We would search in vain in the columns of the New Leader or anywhere else for a statement by the NAC, or even an authoritative individual opinion. The leadership prefer to maintain a diplomatic silence which commits them to

nothing. The reason is not far to seek. To oppose the CP would be for them to come out against “unity”, and they do not wish to take up what might be an unpopular position. To support, would certainly be to offend the Labour bureaucracy with whom they wish to remain on the best terms. The only thing left, is to ignore the issue altogether. Either way, the arrant cowardice and refusal to take a theoretically correct stand is demonstrated beyond possibility of refutation.

On all the fundamental problems and tasks facing the British workers, the ILP has no thought-out answers. It proceeds not from the theoretical basis of Marxism, but blindly and convulsively in empirical jerks from day to day. Our analysis on ILP policy in relation to Stalinism and reformism, India, Beveridge, Parliament – all questions show this. Whether the ILP deals with the past, the present or the future of the workers’ movement, it is just the same.

Meanwhile political developments within Britain have resulted in a substantial increase in the membership and support of the party. The old membership are being revived and renewed by the development of events. Among the new members a process of differentiation and criticism of the limitations of the centrist leadership has been developing. Even the old members, as they have been compelled to put the policy of the party to the test in the unions and factories, have begun to realise its gaps and inadequacies. The pressure of the workers on these members and the reactions of the members to the workers has had its effect. They look with a new eye towards the policy of the ILP.

Unlike the first conference, the present one meets at a time when all prospects of a gradual development of the class struggle in Britain have receded into the dim and distant past. In the last decades the utopian character of the programme of the founders of the ILP has been drowned in the waves of the class struggle. In Britain today, we have a pre-revolutionary situation. It is on this basis and the striving of the masses that the ILP has secured its rise from political obscurity and decline to an important factor in the situation. A few decades were necessary to demonstrate the inadequacy of the old ILP policy in practice. It will require

not 50 years to show the hopelessness of the present leadership and policy. Events will drive the centrists from one position to another in rapid succession. We have seen this already between this conference and the last. The process will now be speeded up. The ILP is doomed. The years of vegetation and comfortable phrases are at an end. All parties will be tested in action.

The kaleidoscope of the ILP with Maxton, Smith, Padley, Brockway, all pulling in different directions, now this way, now that, will meet a sharp test. The differing elements within the party at the first real crisis will pull in different directions. The ILP will splinter into pieces. In his Jubilee in the New Leader of January 9th, John McNair writes:

“But the past is only useful if it teaches us to avoid our errors and to profit by our experience. Where are we now?”

We would seek in vain for an examination of the policy to match these good words. They remain empty of all content: a mockery of the position of the ILP, which never examines the past policy to prepare for the future one. However, this could be a useful basis for the best and sincere revolutionary elements to seek to end all equivocation and ambiguity in its policy. In doing so, they will find that only the policy and method of Bolshevism – the programme and banner of the Fourth International – can provide a solution to the problems of our times.

# **The ILP in transition**

**By Ted Grant**

[Workers' International News, Vol. 5. No. 11, May 1943]

The ILP conference this year provides instructive material on the evolution and direction of this party. Under the influence of the beginnings of mass radicalisation of the working class, the ILP is increasing its membership and its influence fairly considerably. For the first time for years the finances of the party are in a sound position. Taking all these factors into consideration the leadership seems to have regarded with satisfaction the proceedings of their Jubilee conference.

The changes in mass consciousness in Britain are revealing themselves in many ways. A political ferment and awakening is taking place among large sections of the working class. The middle class is beginning to break away from allegiance to the traditional parties of British capitalism, as the growth and success of the Common Wealth movement[15] has shown. The by-election success of the anti-government candidates, on a vague programme of pseudo-socialism or social reform, has shown the steady drift of the masses towards the left and towards socialism. Among the basic mass of the Labour workers a feeling of disgust and uneasiness at the association of the leadership with the Tories in the government has been growing. The masses are beginning to discern the real meaning of the coalition with finance capital. A movement for the ending of the electoral truce is gaining momentum among the workers in the trade unions, co-operatives and within the Labour Party. It is on this background of the beginnings of mass upsurge, that the ILP has gained its modest successes.

A comparison between last year's conference and the one just held indicates the effect that these developments are having externally and internally on the ILP.

At the last conference a sharp swing to the left was to be observed among the membership and a process of differentiation taking place. For the first time for years real lively discussion and a critical attitude on the part of the membership could be seen – a tendency to seek a policy reflecting a genuine revolutionary solution towards the problems facing the working class. As a reflection of this a left-wing tendency was crystallised, weak and inexperienced perhaps, but orienting itself on the platform of Bolshevism. Faced with a growing opposition of this kind, the leadership revealed itself in its true centrist character, though this time garbed in a cloak of sectarianism. The basic issue at last year's conference was the question of the "Socialist Britain Now" campaign and the problem of the Labour Party. The young left wing put forward the correct Marxist position – the need to conduct agitation among the masses around a programme which would have as its key issue the demand to the Labour leadership to end the coalition and wage a struggle for power on a socialist programme. The leadership of the ILP recoiled from this with horror though refusing to face up to the problem of how to expose the Labour leadership.

Nothing could reveal the difference between Marxism and centrism better than the attitude towards this question. In it is summed up the tremendous gulf that lies between an assimilation of Leninism and a serious attitude towards the problem of preparing and organising a party of the socialist revolution, and the superficiality and shallowness of centrism. For this question – the key question of revolutionary policy for Britain – and the methods adopted to approach its solution contains within itself the necessity to understand and appreciate the mode of development of the working class towards the socialist revolution, an appreciation of the meaning and role of reformism, the necessity to educate the masses through their own experience, and an understanding of the decisive role which a party armed with a correct policy and method, can and should play in such a situation.



Despite the leadership, the delegates striving to find a way out of their isolation from the masses which the “Socialist Britain Now” campaign signally failed to dispel, passed the resolution of Labour to power on a socialist programme by a big majority, without perhaps clearly understanding this policy.

The twelve months that have passed since then have confirmed completely the correctness of the analysis made by the fourth internationalists. Even the leadership of the ILP has become aware of the sterility of their previous policy. The progressive movement of the trade unionist and Labour workers away from the strangling embrace of the coalition with big business and towards class independence, has already reached such proportions that they are beginning to observe what is taking place beyond their noses. Large numbers of union branches, Labour parties and even some individual leaders of the LP and trade union movement, under the pressure of the mass feeling, have come out against the coalition. Alas! They have not even given a single thought or a glance in the direction of the “Socialist Britain Now” campaign. Naturally, this development which they had not foreseen, has thrown the leadership off balance. A Marxist leadership could predict, assess and help to accelerate the awakening of the Labour masses and simultaneously warn and prepare them for the inevitable sell-out of the Labour leadership. In that lies the essence of the policy of Labour to power. Not so the leadership of the ILP. Trotsky once said sectarians were really opportunists afraid of their opportunism. That is especially so with the ILP leadership, except of course that their opportunism is really organic. If their previous sectarian attitude had even a grain of sense or the semblance of an argument in its favour it was in pointing out the dangers of a mass reaction and disillusionment and despair on the part of the masses at a new betrayal on the part of the Labour leadership. It is precisely this aspect of their argument that they have cast aside.

Maxton, at the recent Jubilee conference, spoke of the “revolutionary potentialities” of the Labour Party. Brockway, at the public rally in the evening spoke of converting the Labour Party to socialism. Thus it is that the leadership tramples on and hastily abandons the position of yesterday. One thing, and one thing only, remains the same. The decisive refusal under any and all conditions to expose the real nature of the Labour leadership.

Last year when the leadership found itself in a tight corner over the question of why they refused to put forward the idea of Labour to power, while at the same time they refrained from putting up candidates against the Labour Party at by-elections, Maxton unctuously explained that “they did not have sufficient money”. Brockway gave the same explanation at a “Socialist Britain Now” conference when confronted with the question by the Trotskyists. But if this were so the leadership had the responsibility to raise seriously before the membership at the last conference the need to collect money for the purpose. Their failure to do so was, at best, a dereliction of duty. However, a contrast between the last conference and the Jubilee conference will demonstrate that this was a simple but very unprincipled manoeuvre designed to cover up their affinity to the Labour bureaucracy. Brockway and the centrists internationally have spilled no little ink in their virtuous indignation at the so-called “amorality” of Bolshevism-Trotskyism. The tactical “means” of the revolutionists are distorted and falsified and pictured as “dishonest” and for this reason unlikely to achieve the desired “ends”. But when it suits their own ends, the ILP leadership are prepared to use precisely the “dishonest” means which they so falsely attribute to the Trotskyists and Leninists.

Never under any conditions could Bolsheviks stoop to methods such as this. The prime task of the revolution, after all, consists in the education of the masses and of the party. Not having any real principles the centrists cannot explain honestly their stand on a question of this sort because their whole position consists of evasions and subterfuges. To make a principled stand would force them to take outright the reformist or the revolutionary position. The solution of the NAC is simply to avoid the issue and to deceive their own members. Thus awkward thoughts and moods on the part of the membership are avoided. In this way does ILPism differ from revolutionary socialism in its attitude towards the membership of its party and towards the working class.

This happy solution of the problem was not open to the leadership this year. To use the excuse of “lack of money” would be too blatant in face of the financial resources they hold, and even the most inexperienced delegate would not have

believed it. A resolution was put forward from one of the Scottish branches suggesting that if the truce was upheld at the Labour Party conference, the ILP should contest by-elections against the Labour Party as well as against Tories. Naturally, the platform opposed this with all the strength at its command. Maxton, in moving the rejection of amendments which castigated the role of the Labour leadership, argued that the Labour leaders in the main, were decent, well-intentioned fellows and the rank and file Labour workers were as much to blame as the leaders for the situation today! Thus the ILP places the deceiver and the deceived on the same level. What then, is the function of leadership? Perhaps the leadership should follow the rank and file. Thus it is that Maxton, Brockway and the other leaders of the ILP reveal their real lack of elementary Marxist training. But the rejection of the resolution to put up candidates on Maxton's excuses at this conference is a clear indication of the real policy of the NAC – the policy of left flank of Labour reformism!

The resolutions which the leadership pushed through indicate that the realisation of the barrenness of the "Socialist Britain Now" campaign and its obvious impotence to win the masses, has led to a capitulation to the Labour bureaucracy. It is clear that at the first convenient opportunity the ILP will re-affiliate to the Labour Party. This will probably come at the moment when the sweep of the mass movement compels the trade union and Labour leadership reluctantly to end the coalition with the Tories. From the point of view of the Labour bureaucracy, if the ILP were really a revolutionary force, they would oppose re-affiliation tooth and nail. But it is precisely the lack of a real consistent revolutionary policy which would entail as one of its indispensable prerequisites an implacable struggle against the Labour leadership, which will secure a smooth passage for the ILP. They will not and cannot raise the question of affiliation by appealing to the rank and file to support them on a revolutionary policy, thus raising the same issue as an important means of educating mass opinion, but will rely on negotiations with the Labour leadership, negotiations which all the indications show, have already been taking place.

If the ILP were a revolutionary party affiliation under such conditions would be disastrous. But precisely because it is not revolutionary, the move of the ILP towards the Labour Party is a progressive step and can have progressive

repercussions. It can promote a rapid differentiation within the ILP. This does not mean of course, that the revolutionary wing of the ILP should refrain from fighting for a principled fusion and accept the attitude of the leadership as at all progressive. On the contrary, they must intensify the struggle to expose the capitulation of the NAC and educate the widest sections of the party cadres. Once inside the Labour Party, the evolution and crystallisation of the wings will be speeded up. The leadership will be reinforced by such “lefts” as Cove, Messer and others in the Labour Party.

A big section of the left workers in the Labour Party will tend to gravitate towards the ILP. While the leadership would more and more adapt itself to the left reformists and the policy of the ILP would swing sharply to the right. This in its turn would inevitably result in accelerating the education and regroupment of the revolutionary socialist elements within the ILP. With the necessity to wage a struggle against the now left reformist leadership, the ideas of the nascent left wing would be clarified. It would, if it was not to decay and disintegrate completely, find the road to the methods and principles of Bolshevism.

The danger is, however, that the confusion of the ultra-lefts will add further to the lack of clarity, by their opposition to re-affiliation. The palpable opportunism of the leadership may drive a section of the best elements in this direction. Although, of course, after an initial opposition, the ultra-lefts will inevitably capitulate to the leadership. Unless the revolutionary wing succeed in clarifying the issues in the coming months, some of the proletarian elements will be driven along the road of organisational adventures which can only retard the building of the revolutionary party which in turn can but be the party of the Fourth International.

This conference, far more than the last, revealed the ILP in a state of flux. The discussions and the proceedings revealed a state of tremendous confusion in the minds of the delegates and even more so in the leadership. Not a single issue was debated in a manner which would clarify the problems raised and lift the rank and file delegates to a higher political plane. The time of conference was wasted

on trivialities while the leadership blurred and slurred over principled issues. The leadership used the overloaded agenda, which contained dozens of trivial amendments which could easily have been disposed of through the Standing Orders Committee. The result was that on some of the basic resolutions and amendments, no real discussion took place. Half an hour was allotted for the discussion on India, including a speech from the platform! Even on some of the other basic resolutions no thorough discussion could take place. The result was to reduce some of the conference proceedings to little less than a farce. The leadership has full responsibility for this situation, which suited them completely. Because of this the tendencies at the conference were not as clearly marked out from one another as they would otherwise have been. What discussion did take place though, was sufficient to reveal the heterogeneous character of the composition of the ILP.

The pacifist tendency, though obviously on the downward grade, was vociferous and still retained a substantial support. But the working class core of the ILP has been moving steadily away from this position. The Parliamentary group and the NAC betrayed by their speeches that nothing fundamental separates them from the reformism of the Labour Party. The leadership revealed itself as rather nervous at the prospect of a discussion on basic principles.

The left wing tendency moving in the direction of Bolshevism, though young and inexperienced in the face of the old and experienced parliamentarians such as Maxton, made a far bigger impression than at the previous conference. They were clearly finding their feet and securing more support and clearer support in that section of the conference looking for a genuine left lead. In addition, they showed a growth of confidence in themselves and their case and stood up well to the leadership, who tried by numerous tricks to put them off their stride. Unfortunately, the left wing in the ILP is not homogeneous and there is a weak but distinct tendency towards ultra-leftism.

The confusion within the membership, the hurried nature of the discussions, all led inevitably to the victory of the platform. Voting at conferences very often

does not give a clear indication of processes taking place, and especially is this so where the differences are not clarified. On those issues where a fair amount of discussion took place, the left-wing opposition, in all its tendencies, generally secured 40 or 50 votes, that is from a quarter to a third of the conference delegates. However, this would not necessarily be a clear assessment of the strength of the opposition.

The confusion of the leadership on even elementary questions was indicated in the discussion on fascism. A Marxian amendment was moved showing how fascism arose as a mass movement after the failure of the working class to take power in a revolutionary crisis through the failure and sabotage of its organisations; its difference with the rule of capitalists under bourgeois democracy lying in the complete destruction of all organisations of the working class. As usual with the leadership they opposed this amendment and managed to confuse content with form. The so-called “planning” of the state under fascism, which has its counterpart in the bourgeois democratic state machine at the present time they have identified as the essence of fascism. The result of all this confusion is seen in the fact that a delegate could get up on the day after the discussion and blandly announce that fascism, if the masses were not vigilant, could be introduced by the Tories, and even more as a menace, could be introduced by the Labour Party! This statement went by without disturbing the platform in the least and without any comment on their part whatsoever. And why not? Ridley writes the same sort of arrant nonsense in the pages of the New Leader without comment or reply from the editorial board. So light-minded are the leadership of the ILP! They are preparing to enter a party which apparently can impose fascism! Thus they teach and educate the members. Here, comrade Maxton, lies precisely the task of leadership. Conferences in a Bolshevick Party are not meant for the purpose of merely pushing through resolutions and policy, but through discussion they act as a means of clarifying the understanding of the advanced elements in the party as to the basic problems facing the workers. The delegates in their turn assist in educating the rank and file on their return to the branches and thus enrich and strengthen the party.

The confusion, of course, arises from the position of the leadership. On the Beveridge plan they took an out-and-out reformist stand, exactly that of Maxton

in the House of Commons, which differs in no wise from that of the Labour Party or the Stalinists. Pious references, after lauding the Beveridge report, to the realisation that socialism alone could solve the problems of the workers, could easily be paralleled in the statements of these other organisations. The leadership managed to force through their position again mainly due to the restricted period given to discussion.

The only reference to CP affiliation to the Labour Party was made by John McGovern who announced that affiliation by “gangster communism” would mark the end of the Labour Party. While we can agree wholeheartedly with a denunciation of Stalinism, such a method of approaching the problem is the worst that can possibly be made. Hundreds of the mass organisations of the working class have passed resolutions in favour of affiliation and the idea of “unity”. Mere denunciation of Stalinism will not convince the workers who support or sympathise with their application. The present position of the ILP on this is even worse than their previous silence. In its editorial column the New Leader quotes the threats of the Transport Union’s bureaucrats to disaffiliate if the CP should succeed in gaining a majority for its application. Instead of castigating these leaders, who are from a different angle just as reactionary as the Stalinist leadership, the New Leader quotes this as an indication that CP affiliation would disrupt the Labour Party! This argument will certainly render more easy a future application for affiliation from the ILP. But it has nothing in common with a revolutionary attitude towards the question. The threat of these trade union bosses, who incidentally have not consulted their members on the question, is reactionary through and through. Their objection to CP affiliation is not made at all because of the present strike-breaking policy of the CP but from the viewpoint of conservative bureaucrats. Certain sections of the trade union bureaucracy have come out in favour of CP affiliation largely because they believe that the CP will serve as a means of disciplining the workers. There is not a pin to choose between all these bureaucrats. Our attitude of supporting the affiliation as a means of facilitating the exposure of all these gentlemen and the revolutionary regroupment of the workers’ movement is the only principled Marxist one, and the only one which can clarify the issue for the workers.

Incidentally, we notice that the ILP leadership has no qualms in denouncing the

treacherous Stalinist leadership! In this connection we may note that the booklet published by the ILP to celebrate its Jubilee, proudly quotes the ILP's rejection of Lenin's attitude on this question.

During an interview with "Lenin and the Executive of the Communist International [of] which Radek was then secretary, to which they submitted a series of questions and brought back the terms of affiliation now known as The 21 points, decisively rejected at the ILP conference the following year..." the following ideas were developed:

"...it was not considered essential that the ILP should leave the Labour Party, but if it remained affiliated it would be expected to continually fight against its policy and its personnel, acting upon the assumption that its leaders were treacherously betraying the working class movement. To this Wallhead replied that he could not conceive the ILP pursuing a policy of that description..."[16]

This, among other things, prevented the affiliation of the ILP to the Communist International in its revolutionary period. Much water has flown under the bridges since those days. There have been revolutions and counter-revolutions and the world has been plunged into a new imperialist war. But the ILP leadership has not understood or been changed by these events and has not altered its attitude. In 1920 they rejected the Leninist position and moved from the middle of the road back to a reformist position. On a new level the ILP leadership is repeating its history. But this time with different results which will be entirely unexpected to the leadership.

This conference clearly indicates that the evolution of the ILP is being speeded up. The leadership has the illusion that their apparent victory at the conference has ensured a big growth and a pleasant haven within the Labour Party at a later stage. Nothing could be further from reality. It is virtually certain that in the next period the ILP will enter on a period of extensive growth, especially if the truce is broken and they affiliate to the Labour Party. However, coming events in



Britain will put every programme to the test. The revolutionary working class elements in the ILP will inevitably, as they gather experience in the mass movement, correctly realise the real nature of centrism.

The leading figures of the ILP never tire of intoning the “internationalism” of the party. This was emphasised by every leading speaker at the Jubilee conference. In recent weeks Brockway has penned several articles on the question of the “new international” which completely shirk the issue. Instead of raising the question of their international relations and international programme for a full discussion at the conference, the leadership evaded the issue completely. The Standing Orders Committee, no doubt reflecting the position of the NAC (since the issue is slid over in that body’s report) rejected a resolution from a London Branch which would have raised the whole problem for a principled discussion. A reference back on this question was defeated by a little over a dozen votes. It is no wonder that the ILP leadership avoids a discussion on internationalism. The fate of the essentially fictitious London Bureau, which Brockway piously refers as the ILP’s national affiliates, speaks too much against the ILP’s methods on the international arena. The American affiliate of the Lovestoneites which the ILP boasted was stronger than the Trotskyists, committed the unprecedented step in the working class movement of committing suicide and dissolving itself. The Norwegian group long ago reverted back to the Second International. The German SAP came out for support of the “democracies” in the war. The French group of Doriot finished up in the camp of fascism. The latest reports indicate that the former Swedish section has now fused with the Communist Party.

The best and most resolute party of the centrists, the Spanish POUM proved incapable of facing the test of the revolution and through its own vacillation and indecision, was largely responsible for the disastrous defeat of the Spanish revolution and its own destruction.

Within the ILP there were as many groupings and tendencies moving in different directions as there were in the ill-fated London Bureau. The fact that the ILP will in all probability gain tremendously in numbers and influence is the guarantee of

the future. On the contrary, the process of differentiation and of sharp clashes between the differing and antagonistic groupings would be intensified by the incapacity of the leadership to give a revolutionary lead to the working class. The all-inclusive Bureau collapsed. The ILP's methods of building the International are precisely the same as its methods of building the Party. The all-inclusive Party will suffer a similar fate as the all-inclusive International.

However, there is a large and growing left wing in the ILP composed almost exclusively of working class elements which is striving to transform the ILP into a revolutionary socialist party. The main task of this grouping consists in theoretical education, training and hardening out of its forces. With correct and systematic work it should win the best elements of the ILP workers towards a genuine Marxist policy. The debacle of the ILP is inevitable. But the best elements will inevitably break completely with centrism and find that the methods and policy of the Fourth International alone can build a revolutionary party as an instrument for emancipation of the working class.

# **Labour Party endorses truce**

## **Not reflection of rank and file feeling**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 13, Mid-June 1943]

The Labour Party conference met this year when a critical attitude on the part of the mass of the population towards the capitalist class and the government has become widespread throughout the country. It met when the military situation has changed sharply in favour of Anglo-American imperialism and when the possibility of the war ending looms ahead in a sharp form. With this, the working class is beginning to ask what sort of world the rulers are preparing for after the war.

What will be the reward for all this blood and toil, tears and sweat, is the thought that grips every workingman and woman. The Labour workers remember how they were fooled by promises in the last war, which were not carried out after the “glorious victory” had been won.

The real role of the Labour Party in the coalition was clearly demonstrated by the speech of one of the delegates, Alderman Luke Hogan of Liverpool.

“The Labour members of the government had been given the most ‘sticky jobs’. Bevin, Morrison and Dalton were doing jobs that the Prime Minister knew he could not have got a Tory to carry through successfully.”

No better description of the role of Labour in the government could possibly be given. They have been given the job of doing all the dirty work for the bosses, and what have they received in return? Ask any rank and file worker in factory, mine or workshop, and the reply would be given in unequivocal terms. The capitalists have taken everything and given nothing in return. That this is so is indicated by the position on the Trade Disputes Act[17] which was revealed at the conference. The TUC has been negotiating for months, and years, since the coalition was formed, for a repeal of some of the provisions of the Trade Disputes Act. They have not even demanded the repeal of this obnoxious and vindictive anti-trade union and anti-working class Act, as would seem an elementary demand which should be made in what is supposed to be a 50-50 coalition. But the capitalists are not prepared to budge an inch. They are preparing systematically to attack the workers’ standards of living as savagely, or even more savagely, after the war, than they are doing at the present time. They are not prepared to make a concession with regard to affiliation of civil servants to the TUC, which would strengthen the unity of the working class.

Concessions can only be extracted from the capitalists when they are forced to give them by the pressure of the workers. Even the super-constitutionalist, Sir Walter Citrine, who could never be accused of being in favour of direct action, has been pushed from behind by the postal workers and compelled to recommend “unconstitutional” action and to support the defying of the law by the postal workers in applying for re-affiliation. Because of the bold stand of the postal workers, it is possible that a section of the Act may be repealed. The capitalists may fear complications if they do not retreat on this question. But this in itself is an indication of what the coalition is worth to the workers.

## **The political truce**

The first item on the agenda was the most important one for the conference – the political truce. The resolution for its ending was defeated by a big majority: on a card vote 2,243,000 votes to 374,000 votes. A large number of trade union representatives and individual Labour parties abstained from voting. At first sight this may seem surprising, compared with the result of last year's conference when the truce, despite all the pleas of the Labour leaders, was only upheld by the narrow majority of 66,000 votes. What has happened in the meantime to make this big difference?

In the ordinary course of events, with the extension of discontent with the government, it might have been expected that the truce would have been ended this year. But it must be remembered that only in an indirect and distorted way are the feelings of the workers reflected at a conference of this sort. The bulk of the delegates were old men, who in many cases have lost touch with the working class and have ceased to reflect their moods. Not only that. The vote last year reflected the frustration and the feeling of resentment which pervades the workers. But they did not understand the need for a bold fighting programme on which to appeal to the workers. Those delegates who voted for the ending of the truce last year, at the same time voted their support of Churchill. Such was the confusion.

This year, the leadership used as their main argument for the continuance of the truce, that to break it would mean the end of the present government. This of course is perfectly correct. But instead of accepting the challenge and putting forward the demand for a general election, which could be contested on a fighting socialist programme of struggle against reaction and fascism at home and abroad, which would gain them an overwhelming majority at the polls – the “left” wing argued in favour of ending the truce and staying in the government simultaneously! You can't have your cake and eat it! Better frank capitulation to the capitalists than an absurd and dishonest position of that sort.

The only expressed opposition to the war, came from Rhys Davies, who spoke

demanding the end of the truce and put a purely pacifist case. The Labour bureaucracy seems to like getting him to speak at conferences, as they apparently look on him as a useful Aunt Sally[18]. Delegates will obviously not be won over by his sterile and utopian case.

The oppositional pressure of the workers has not yet reached the stage of forcing the Labour Party, even the demagogues of the left, to an open break with the Tories. But this year's vote is not a reflection of the feelings of the rank and file of the Labour workers. The Labour and trade union bureaucrats can manipulate a vote. But the final decision does not rest with them. The question of whether the truce will continue or not, will be decided by the events of the class struggle in the near future. Any big movement of the workers would put a strain on the coalition which it is not likely to survive. It seemed unlikely that the coalition would survive from the last conference to this. It is even more unlikely that the coalition will last until next year's conference, despite this year's big vote. The workers have not yet said their last word.

The real position of the Labour leaders is shown by the fact that not only are they opposed to a socialist programme now, but in actual fact have indicated their position in advance for after the war as well. In his speech Attlee said:

“We reaffirm our view that over a great field of activity there must be public control. In other fields private enterprise will continue to operate, but in conformity with the well-being of the community.”

Unanimous decisions on increases in service pay and old age pensions were passed. None of the delegates was so rude and awkward as to enquire what had happened to the resolutions which were also passed unanimously on the same questions last year! It would have put the leadership on the spot. Immediately after last year's conference Attlee in Parliament stated that the government could not consider a rise “at the present time”. Only after a long period was a rise given, the magnificent sum of 6d a day. The fate of the demand for old age

pensions increases has been similar. The debate on the Beveridge report revealed the position on reforms and fundamental changes better than anything else. An amendment on the Beveridge report was moved by Sidney Silverman, Labour MP for Nelson and Colne, expressing according to the Daily-Herald report,

“profound distrust at the government’s attitude to the Beveridge plan in Parliament. It called on the Parliamentary Labour Party to continue its efforts to secure ‘immediate legislation’ to implement the principles of the scheme.”

This amendment was rejected by 1,715,000 votes to 955,000 votes and the Executive’s resolution on the report was carried. This indicated rather vaguely and ambiguously in the words of the Herald report that:

“While recognising the need for further examination of some of the proposals, the resolution called for speedy preparations of the necessary legislation, so that the scheme ‘should be ready to be put into operation at the end of hostilities’.”

Thus even the meagre proposals for social reform envisaged by the Beveridge scheme were not to be demanded from the capitalists as a condition for co-operation. The Labour leaders could gain a majority at a general election on this issue alone, if they revealed the real position of the government of capitalists and bankers.

The Communist Party affiliation was rejected by a vote of 1,951,000 votes to 712,000. The main argument of Morrison against it was the false one that the CP based itself on a revolutionary philosophy. This of course is incorrect, as today the CP is far to the right of the LP itself. Even if true, the Labour Party as the party that claims to be the political expression of the organised workers, should have room in its ranks for all tendencies to express themselves. The entry of the Stalinists would have been the means for facilitating the exposure of both

Stalinists and Labour bureaucrats in the eyes of the workers.

At the time of writing this (Wednesday) article, some important questions remain to be discussed including the post-war world.

The basic need for the workers in the next period lies in the demand that Labour should break the coalition with the bosses and wage a struggle for power on a socialist programme. Workers' International League will fight side by side with the Labour workers to achieve this aim. On this road lies the next step forward to convince the workers through their own experience of the correctness of our ideas and the necessity of a revolutionary socialist organisation to lead them to workers' power and socialism.



# **Labour leaders back Vansittartism**

## **Shameful resolution passed at conference**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 14, July 1943]

A shameful resolution which smacks of Vansittartism[19] was carried at the last Labour Party conference. A resolution which violates all the principles of international socialism to which the Labour and trade union leadership has paid lip-service in the past. As if to underline these cowardly and shameful concessions to chauvinism, the Labour Party did not allow fraternal delegates from socialist parties of “enemy” countries to be represented at the conference.

The resolution lays the responsibility for the Hitler regime and its crimes onto the shoulders of the German people. It says that the party “recognises that there are Germans who are opposed to the policy of their government but believes that these Germans are in a very small minority,” and,

“that the Nazi government would not have remained in power or have been able to conduct a total war but for the support it received from the overwhelming mass of the German people. It declares that no permanent peace will be possible unless Germany is completely disarmed in accordance with the provisions of article 8 of the Atlantic Charter and the spirit of aggressive nationalism entirely eradicated.

“It therefore welcomes any steps that may need to be taken for the re-education of the German people, so that they may play their part in the creation of a democratic, peaceful and secure world.”

Speaking in favour, and representing the attitude of the trade union and Labour bureaucrats, Charles Dukes, general secretary of the Municipal and General Workers’ Union, made a vile attack on the German workers:

“Between the Weimar republic and the rise of Hitler to power he had seen the overwhelming majority of German trade unionists go over to Nazism.” (Daily Herald, June 18 1943)

Thus the Labour and trade union leaders repeat the lies and slanders of the capitalists against the German people. It is an eloquent comment on the position taken at the Labour conference, that the formerly pro-fascist and pro-Nazi capitalist press such as the Daily Mail and the Sunday Dispatch enthusiastically hailed this decision of the Labour Party conference.

The idea which is created, that the German workers must be held responsible for the crimes of the Nazis and for the coming to power of Hitler is a deliberate travesty of history. But if the German workers are to be held responsible for the crimes of their masters, then all the more blame should be attached, not to the British workers but to their “leaders” who at the present time are supporting a government which represents the monopoly capitalists who supported Hitler to the utmost extent. It was the British capitalists who aided, armed and financed Hitler and white-washed his crimes against the trade unionists, communists and socialists, when he destroyed the organisations of the working class in Germany. They regarded all this approvingly as a means of creating a “bulwark against Bolshevism” in Germany, with Hitler as a useful and pliable tool they could use to destroy the Soviet Union. Churchill openly praised Mussolini, Hitler and

Franco before the war[20]. Amery justified the crimes of the Japanese militarists against China[21]. The British capitalist class has always supported fascism and reaction throughout the world. Is the responsibility for these crimes then, to be laid at the door of the British working class? Are the British workers to be held responsible for the crimes which British imperialism is committing in India at this very moment? The majority of the population in Britain are not aware of what is taking place.

The Labour and trade union leaders are. But they are silent! They have the possibility to speak out without the danger of the firing squad and the concentration camp which faces the opposition in Germany and Italy. But they are silent! They thus make themselves fully responsible for the crimes of British imperialism. The British ruling class has allied itself with Sikorski, Giraud, de Gaulle, Darlan and other fascist and pro-fascist leaders and governments[22]. They have in the recent period given Franco, one of the fascist butchers, supplies of vital materials and loans to prop up his regime! But the Labour and trade union leadership is silent and even supports these measures!

### **CP joins in the reactionary campaign**

The Labour leaders would not have dared to so openly and shamelessly support the capitalists in their slander and defaming of the German people, had it not been for the even more despicable and nauseating campaign being conducted by the so-called Communist Party. Its organ the Daily Worker of June 10th contains an article by D. N. Pritt, headed Germany after the war in which he approves of the demand made in a resolution to be put before the Labour Party conference that "Germany must be disarmed and her capacity to re-arm destroyed, so far as this is technically possible." This would mean, if carried out, the dismantling of Germany's heavy industry and the reduction not only of the Germans' standard of living to starvation level, but that of all Europe whose economy in large part is dependent on that of Germany. But then Pritt proceeds:

“Together with the above measures must be tackled the problem of how to deal with the great masses of Germans who today acquiesce in the Hitler regime and its crimes. For this they cannot be absolved, and their late repentance will be suspect.”

To make their position quite definite the Daily Worker of June 24th, in an editorial declares, while hypocritically pretending to dissociate itself from the Vansittartites:

“The pacifists gaze through theoretical spectacles, blind to the corruption and degradation of the great majority of the German community today.”

The pacifists are merely dragged into this argument as a shield to conceal the real aim of the Stalinist renegades. This was indicated some time back when Moscow Radio broadcast the aims of the “Union of the Polish Patriots” for Poland after the war. Silesia, East Prussia and Danzig are to be taken from Germany and handed back to Poland. The Daily Worker printed a report of this broadcast with approval. Although previously they had shown fake indignation at similar suggestions put out by a group of Tory MPs for the dismemberment of Germany.

### **They were responsible for Hitler**

What does all this attack on the German workers amount to? Thousands and tens of thousands of the underground opposition continue the struggle against Hitler, despite the terrible risks and penalties, and other tens of thousands fill the concentration camps or have been executed. Nevertheless, it is true at the present time that the German workers and the German people generally, while not supporting Hitler, have continued to tolerate the rule of Hitler during the war. But they do so because they do not see any other way out. Stalin offers them no

alternative except support for Churchill and Anglo-American imperialism. Hitler points to the results of the defeat of Germany in the last world war. The “democratic” states stripped Germany of her resources. Even after the armistice, the blockade of Germany was continued and a million German babies died for lack of milk. Goebbels, in his propaganda points out that if British and American imperialism win the war, a terrible fate would befall the German people. This is perfectly true. And the Labour leaders and Stalinists, by supporting the ruling class, paralyse and confuse the working class in Germany. Forced to choose between support for Churchill and the ruling class, and victory for Hitler, the British workers naturally would support the former. The German workers, while they do not see any other path, naturally enough tolerate the latter. The way out of this dilemma lies in the workers in Britain fighting for power on a revolutionary socialist programme. Faced with a workers’ government in Britain making an international socialist appeal, Hitler could not last for more than a few weeks or months at most. But, the Labour leaders and Stalinists, by supporting the ruling class in Britain, aid and give support to Hitler, who then uses the argument that the Labour movement in Britain stands for Vansittartism.

But what is absolutely shameless in this cynical attack on the German workers is that the actual responsibility for the coming to power of Hitler rests not on the shoulders of the German workers, but precisely on those gentlemen of the Stalinist and Labour bureaucracy and their brothers in Germany who have the audacity to point the accusing finger of scorn at the German workers. In spite of the lies of Dukes the overwhelming majority of the German workers, and trade unionists especially, never supported Hitler. When in 1918 the German workers made a revolution and overthrew the Kaiser it was the German social-democrats who saved capitalism and prevented the workers from taking power. The rise of Hitler was due to the slump of 1929-33 when the failure of the Socialist and Communist Party to show a way out, led the bulk of the middle class, not the workers, in sheer despair and frenzy to throw themselves behind the Nazis. But Hitler could still have easily been defeated. The social-democrats told the workers to trust Hindenburg as a bulwark against Hitler, just as the Stalinists and Labour leaders ask the workers to support Churchill today. Both the social-democrats and the Stalinists refused to have a united front against Hitler which would have sealed his doom. The “Communist” Party in Germany even voted together with the fascists against the socialist government in Prussia[23]. By splitting the ranks of the working class and paralysing their forces both the

Stalinist and social-democrats bear responsibility for the victory of Hitler. 8,000,000 German workers supported the social-democrats; 6,000,000 German workers supported the Communist Party. Millions of the German workers were armed; they were anxious and eager to crush the monster of fascism. But the leadership betrayed the struggle. They were incapable of waging a real fight. Trotsky and the Fourth International waged an international campaign for four years from 1930 to 1933, demanding that the German labour and communist parties enter into a united front to crush Hitler. But these traitors refused to do so.

The CP declared, even after the first year of Hitler's rule, that the coming to power of fascism was a victory for the working class, as it aggravated the class struggle; that Hitler would not last very long! The trade union leaders in Germany and the Socialist Party even voted for Hitler after he came to power! And what is important to note, the Labour and trade union bureaucrats in Britain attempted to justify the policy of their counterparts in Germany. At the TUC conference in 1933, Citrine justified the refusal of the trade union leaders to call a general strike which could have overthrown Hitler, because it would have led to civil war! And now these arrant hypocrites blame the German workers.

Hitler's regime has endured ten years. He has piled agony upon agony on the German people and now the people of occupied Europe. But already the ground is shaking under his feet. The German workers are beginning to stir. They will overthrow Hitler. But the British workers must help them in their difficult struggle by continuing the fight for workers' power and socialism and extending the hand of friendship and comradeship to their German brothers. Do not let the British and American capitalists intervene against the coming German revolution. The Labour and Stalinist leaders do not represent the views of the rank and file British workers. Together with the German workers we will build a new world out of the blood and chaos of capitalism. Not for a treaty of revenge but for the socialist united states of Europe!

# **Appeal is in danger**

## **Tories seek to suppress our voice**

**[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 22, November 1943]**

### **Paper control used for political victimisation**

The voice of revolutionary socialism is in danger of being suppressed. On a technical plea, the paper controller has suspended the license for both the Socialist Appeal and Workers' International News. There is an implied threat to revoke our license altogether. These are the facts.

We must sound the alarm to our readers and friends. Never have we been faced with such a grave situation. In this period we need the full assistance and solidarity of every single friend, as we have never needed it before.

For two years, the Tories have been hammering at Herbert Morrison to suppress the Socialist Appeal and the Trotskyists. In Parliament and out of Parliament these representatives of big business have been pleading with Morrison, not only to suppress the Appeal but to suppress our organisation, Workers' International League, and imprison its leaders. Morrison has refused on the plea that our press and party have not sufficient influence, although he threatened us with suppression about two years ago.

The Tories do not challenge the truth of what we print. On the contrary, it is because the Socialist Appeal alone of all the British working class press is fearless and consistent in its exposures of Tory aims that they demand a black out.

When the Barrow strike was taking place and the campaign was launched against us by Bevin, who accused the Trotskyists of being responsible for the wave of strikes, the Tory press used the situation to renew the campaign to suppress us.

The Daily Mail editorially demanded that police measures be taken against us. Charles Sutton, the Mail's industrial correspondent stated that Herbert Morrison was reconsidering his belief that we had only a small influence in the country and was changing his mind about leaving us alone. This was probably wishful thinking on the part of Sutton and his editor, but it is an indication of how the most vicious anti-labour press look at the situation.

It is not possible to say exactly what the position is among the government tops; it is [however] possible to state openly that the attack against the Socialist Appeal did not arise from the local office of the Paper Controller but was clearly motivated and directed from the top, the office of Tory Minister of Supplies, Sir Andrew Duncan.

All the indications are, that failing to get Morrison to carry out their foul demands, and following on the violent attacks against the Trotskyists by Bevin – which indicates that the Tories can expect the support of Bevin in any steps they take against the Socialist Appeal – the right wing have become emboldened and have used Duncan's office for a stab in the back at the Socialist Appeal and thus at the whole working class.



The use of the Paper Controller to strangle the Socialist Appeal is an attempt at political assassination in the dark-out of the public eye. We will not allow it to happen. We will bring their sinister activities into the open. If they insist on suppressing us they will be forced to do it publicly, before the eyes of the whole of the working class – in Parliament.

It is not because paper is short that we are being attacked. Every paper and magazine in the country is getting an increased allocation. Sir Andrew Duncan recently let it be known in Parliament, that not every journal uses its quota. It is clearly therefore for political reasons.

The Socialist Appeal is fast becoming recognised as the leading political and industrial paper of the British working class. Everyone knows this. In every part of the country, the advanced workers pass it from hand to hand because there are too few copies in circulation because there is one copy where there should be ten. This is what the Tories fear. This is why they are taking backstair methods to suppress the Socialist Appeal.

At present we are conducting negotiations with the Paper Controller. We do not know how these negotiations will go. But we can assure our friends that we will fight to the last ditch to keep the Socialist Appeal regularly on the streets. We will refuse to have our voice silenced. This may involve us in costly legal expenses.

Besides moral assistance we need every penny of financial assistance that we can get. Readers, friends, fight for the Appeal; give us the cash to make our voice heard.

Political Bureau, Workers' International League

Editorial Board, Socialist Appeal

Editorial Board, Workers' International News

# **Internationalism and centrism**

## **Ridley and Brockway exponents of confusion**

**By Ted Grant**

[Workers' International News, Vol. 5 No. 6, February 1944]

The question of the international is the key question of our epoch. In it is involved the fate not only of the ILP but of the working class throughout the world for many decades to come. That is why it is of decisive importance for revolutionaries to have complete clarity as to what we mean by rebuilding the international.

From this point of view the contributions of Ridley and Brockway to the Internal Bulletin reveal a deplorable lack of understanding of the problem. Ridley's contribution, which is so enthusiastically praised by Brockway, does not once really get down to the basis of the problem. He starts off on the wrong foot immediately by introducing entirely irrelevant and erroneous conceptions on the "internationalism" of the Mohammedans and of the bourgeois revolution. As a self styled Marxist Ridley should know better than that. Internationalism is not an idea which has its application at any period in history. The material basis has to be prepared if the idea of internationalism is to assume any reality whatsoever. That was precisely the historic role of capitalism: the development of the entire globe into a single economic interdependent whole through the creation of a world market, to which every country's and even every continent's economy is indissolubly linked and bound. This is the material basis which links the interests

of the workers of all lands and on which Marx built his conception of internationalism. The slogan: Workers of the world unite! was not put forward from a sentimental point of view – which was completely foreign to Marx – but as a scientific expression of the interests of the working class; an expression of the interests of the development of world economy. To talk about the possibilities of internationalism before the development of capitalism as a world economy has laid the basis for it, is to deal with the question from a vulgar utopian point of view, and to reject the very elementary basis of Marxism.

That this lapse is not an accidental one, is shown by Ridley's treatment of the problems of the rise and decline of the first three internationals and his light-minded attitude towards the problem of the Fourth International.

Even accepting the explanation given by Ridley that the conditions of imperialism led to the decline and degeneration of the second and third internationals, not to speak of the first, what follows from this? To argue the inevitability of this decline from the objective conditions of capitalism alone, is to reason not as a Marxist but as a fatalist. Precisely on this question, more than any other, the “dialectical” approach – Ridley uses this expression while employing a crassly empirical method – is necessary. This can be seen by Ridley's references to the Bolshevik Party. He writes:

“The revolutionary character which Bolshevism alone among the parties of the Second International, still retained, was due primarily to the still feudal-absolutist nature of the Russian state, which made reformism impossible.”

As an explanation of the development of the Bolshevik Party and of its success, this falls rather short of the mark, to say the least. The “feudal absolutist nature of the Russian state” did not prevent the development of Menshevism which played the dominating role in the early stages of the Russian revolution. Nor did it prevent Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin from taking up a fundamentally false attitude during the course of the revolution; an attitude and policy which, if

carried out, would have made the victory of the Russian revolution impossible. Had their fatal course been followed and the revolution been irretrievably wrecked, no doubt Ridley, with his erudite historical method, would have announced with his air of great profundity “Russia is a backward feudal country entirely unripe for socialism (which incidentally was the argument of the Mensheviks at the time). Given the immaturity of the proletariat and of social relations, the seizure of power by the workers was a fantastic dream.”

This false conception of the development of world history is shown in the reason he gives for the failure of the Third International which was conceived on Ridley’s admission on the basis of a complete break with reformism and its policies.

“These can be reduced to two: the failure of international revolution in the first phase – 1919-26 – and the subsequent impossibility of ‘combining’ an active policy of world revolution with the economic needs of the backward Russian state. We may add that the first of these two causes had itself a double root in: the corruption of the Western workers by imperialism and in the organisation of the Comintern, which, arising on the still mediaeval soil of Russia, adopted inevitably pre-democratic, pre-capitalist forms of organisation which unfitted it for victory in the more advanced Western world, which had already traversed its bourgeois democratic revolution. E.g. to lead an anti-capitalist revolution from a pre-capitalist soil was to lead history from behind. Sooner or later, the world revolution had to be sacrificed to the needs of Russia or vice-versa. This was the basis of the Trotsky versus Stalin controversy...”

Ridley’s reasons for the collapse of the international explain precisely nothing, in fact they reveal that Ridley has not the slightest understanding of the basic lessons of our epoch. In the first place why was it impossible to combine “an active policy of world revolution with the economic needs of the backward Russian state”? Far from being in conflict (this is a conception that, like much else, Ridley has borrowed from the Stalinists whom he professes to despise, and indeed, if correct could serve as a justification of the policies of the Russian

Stalinists) the two were and, even today, are indissolubly bound together. It is not an accident that the idea of five year plans was developed by the internationalists and opposed in the initial stages by Stalin. It is not the economic interests of Russia which are in conflict with the international revolution, but the interests of the Stalinist bureaucracy; and incidentally the latter are contradictory to the “economic needs” of the Soviet state as well.

This one point in itself is an example of Ridley’s anti-Marxian and shallow method of analysis. The explanation for the failure of the international revolution is about on the same level. The “corruption” of the Western workers did not prevent them in the period 1919-26 from advancing on the road of revolution. The German revolution, Austrian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, etc.; the seizure of the factories by the Italian workers; the revolutionary possibilities in France and Britain during 1918-20; the revolutionary situation in Germany in 1923; the general strike in Britain in 1926 – Ridley is completely blind to these. His petty bourgeois arrogance can only see corruption of the workers. In fact, no other period in history has witnessed so many heroic and selfless attempts on the part of the masses in the West to overthrow capitalism, to deal with Europe alone. Heroic efforts which were continued with the movements of the Belgian, Austrian, Spanish and French workers in the last decade. No more could possibly be asked of the workers than their insurrectionary replies to the crimes of imperialism since the last world war.

It is precisely on the basis of the lessons of these unsuccessful attempts, that the new international must be built. To these, the sectarian-centrist Ridley is completely blind, as his second reason discloses: “Sooner or later the world revolution had to be sacrificed to the needs of Russia, or vice-versa.” Why? However, there is no need to dwell on this point. But Ridley makes an assertion with regard to “organisation” of which he does not bother to give the slightest proof. In fact precisely the opposite is the case. The history of the last few decades is marked by many revolutions. Only one was victorious. Because of the absolutist-feudal regime which produced an absolutist-feudal organisation to combat it? – that is what Ridley is attempting to imply. Utter rubbish! The Russian revolution was victorious because not only all the other conditions for revolution were present – they have been present many times in other countries

of the East and West – not only the objective conditions were present, but the subjective as well: the existence of a Bolshevik Party and a Bolshevik leadership with Bolshevik organisational method – with a correct policy based on revolutionary Marxism.

The great contribution of Lenin to Marxism was not only in theory but precisely on the question of organisation. The immaturity of the revolutionary vanguard and the mistakes which flowed from this was the cause of the failure of the Communist International in the early years; the absence precisely of Bolshevik parties and Bolshevik methods of organisation ensured the doom of the revolutions after the war.

In Germany one of the reasons, if not the main reason for the failure of the Spartacists under Rosa Luxemburg to lead the German revolution to success was the fact that the German revolutionary left was not organised as a Bolshevik Party and with Bolshevik methods. Or perhaps Ridley, with his social revolutionary fatalism would argue that Luxemburg and the German revolutionaries were also corrupted by German imperialism?

Ridley asserts that the methods of the Bolsheviks pertained to “pre-capitalist” Russia: that is, they were good enough for barbarian and backward Russians but certainly not for cultured “intellectuals” of the Ridley stamp. Far from the method of organisation stemming from Russia’s past, it was created by Lenin, as was Bolshevism itself, on the importation of Marxism, i.e. “German – English – French” socialism into Russia. However, exactly the opposite conclusions would flow from Ridley’s argument if he had thought out the question clearly. According to his method of analysis the development of the labour movement in the West was conditioned by the “corruption” of the workers, whereas the Russian absolutism produces Bolshevism. Consequently, the so-called “democratic” methods of organisation of the socialist movement in the West are an expression of the corruption of the working class, according to this logic. To put the problem thus is to demonstrate its absurdity. If the argument on organisational structure has any validity at all, it can only be that Bolshevik

organisation has stood the test of history; all other methods have brought the proletariat to catastrophe.

If Ridley, and also the ILP NAC, which has apparently endorsed Ridley's ideas in the main, can criticise in detail the alleged mistakes in the organisational structure of the Bolshevik Party, an eager and expectant public has yet to see these committed to paper. If they have a brand new and infallible set of organisational rules which can guarantee success, it would certainly be of interest and enlightenment to study them. Till then Marxists will stick to the organisational method and principle of Bolshevism, a method which guarantees a greater measure of proletarian democracy through the method of democratic centralism than any other yet developed.

Having arrived at the conclusion which has now penetrated even into the skulls of the NAC centrists (at least in their formal statements) that the Second and Third Internationals have collapsed, Ridley proceeds to examine the problem of the Fourth.

“Trotsky was undoubtedly a revolutionary genius, but was too egotistic for a successful practical politician...”

Coming from Ridley, such a trite and frivolous remark could he ignored, except that it demonstrates the real narrowness of outlook which makes him attempt to ascribe his own limited outlook to those he criticises. Probably Ridley is still smarting at the memory of the just criticism levelled against him by comrade Trotsky when he advocated in 1931 the idea of immediately proclaiming the Fourth International! Perhaps Ridley or Brockway or Maxton possess the qualities that make a successful “practical” politician? What makes a man a practical politician is, as usual, not explained. Perhaps Stalin defeated Trotsky and the Left Opposition because he was not “egotistic” and was a “successful practical politician”? In fact Stalin's personal success was due to his personal “egotistic” qualities and his “practical politics”, but hardly served the interests of



socialism. But the very raising of this question in the casual manner it is introduced, serves as an indictment of the impressionistic ideas of Ridley. When Trotsky led the October insurrection and organised the Red Armies, his “egotistic” qualities apparently prevented him from being a “successful” practical politician! What an explanation of events! This is followed up by what is intended as a contemptuous dismissal of the theoretical basis of the Fourth International:

“...its [Fourth International’s – EG] ideology is little more than a continuation of the revolutionary phase of the Comintern.”

He could have said that it was the continuation of the ideology dating back to Marx. What is intended as a sneer, in fact is a testimony to the continuity of revolutionary tradition which is embodied in the Fourth International.

Thus Ridley blindly dismisses the lessons of the last period in shallow personal criticisms, which in any case are false through and through. To expect from Ridley a criticism of or an answer to Trotsky’s theories, methods and contributions to Marxism, would of course be naive. In this domain, like all centrists he would be lost. Thus, after dismissing the egotistic and impractical Trotsky, he concludes his analysis of the development of the international founded by Trotsky:

“In my opinion, any chance of its becoming a mass movement was destroyed by the death of Trotsky, who left no successor of comparable calibre. To be sure, any movement which depends on the writings of a dead man, who is not there to interpret his meaning, must inevitably become scholastic – a worshipper of the dead letter – or sectarian – a permanent wrangle over the unknown meaning. (Bibliolatary is not confined to churches.) The ‘Trotskyist’ movement, with its fierce disputes and endless splits, confirms the above dictum!”

Ridley here shows about as much political perspicacity as Stalin (with apologies to Stalin). Stalin too had the illusion that by murdering Trotsky he could settle accounts once and for all with Trotskyism. True enough, the death of Trotsky constituted a terribly damaging blow against the international working class and against the young and weak forces of the Fourth International. But an international is not one man. An international, as Trotsky had occasion to point out to the ILP, “is not at all a ‘form’ as flows from the utterly false formulation of the ILP. The international is first of all a programme and a system of strategic tactical and organisational methods that flow from it.” It is apparent that an international is not built by squabbles over petty trifles but on great principles. The basic teachings of Trotsky derive from those of Marx, Engels, Lenin. It is on these solid foundations that the groundwork of the Fourth International has been laid. He who rejects the policy of the Fourth International, must show how or wherein they have departed from these basic principles or else wherein these principles have been proved false by experience. Of this, not a word from Ridley or the ILP but instead this puerile argument which is not worthy of even a schoolboy.

However, while talking of the “new international” Ridley is prudently silent on the instructive history of the “international” organisation to which the ILP gave its adherence, the London Bureau[24]. Brockway comments on this significant omission, but attempts to explain it by the suggestion that the “Bureau” never considered itself an international. Certainly the history of the Bureau testifies to the fact that any international grouping of “socialist” parties in modern times, which are not bound together by common principles and a common programme – Marxism-Leninism – will be speedily shattered by the impact of events. There is hardly one of the brother parties of the ILP which is associated with the Bureau today. Under the relentless pressure of the class struggle they have failed to stand the test and have been driven to the four corners of the political compass. The remnants of the Swedish party have gone back to the swamp of Stalinism. The American Lovestoneites[25] have committed suicide by dissolving their organisation. Despite the experience of the war, the Norwegian Labour Party remains the loyal servant of His Majesty, King Haakon. The emigre SAP of Germany has leaned towards the Stalinists and support of the Allies in the war. The Spanish POUM, despite the catastrophe its policy brought about in Spain, is flirting with the idea of an emigre popular front, thus providing a caricature of the policy it operated in the revolution. The rest of the parties,

like all centrist organisations have collapsed in a similar inglorious fashion. The ILP as the lone survivor of this debacle, has itself described a very weird evolution in its policies in the intervening period. If it remains, and can still prate of internationalism, it is not because it is made of sterner material and sticks rigidly to principles. But because it has not yet been put to the test. The POUM at least was far more of a revolutionary organisation, than the ILP ever could be.

The problem of the “new” international can only be understood in relation to the experience of the international working class over the last few decades. It is on this basis that the principles and ideas of the Fourth International have been worked out, with the method of Marxism as the basis. What have the “theoreticians” of the ILP learned? In Stalinism and Bolshevism, Trotsky makes the proud boast:

“The Bolshevik Party was able to carry on such magnificent ‘practical’ work only because it shed the light of theory on all its steps. Bolshevism did not create this theory: it was furnished by Marxism. But Marxism is the theory of movement and not of stagnation. Only events on a tremendous historical scale could enrich the theory itself. Bolshevism [Trotskyism – EG] brought an invaluable contribution to Marxism in its analysis of the imperialist epoch as an epoch of wars and revolutions; of bourgeois democracy in the era of decaying capitalism; of the correlation between the general strike and the insurrection; of the role of party, soviets and trade unions in the epoch of proletarian revolutions; in its theory of the soviet state, of the economy of transition, of fascism and Bonapartism in the epoch of capitalist decline; finally in its analysis of the degeneration of the Bolshevik party itself and of the soviet state. Let any other tendency be named that has added anything essential to the conclusions and generalisations of Bolshevism.”[26]

In rejecting the programme of the Fourth International naturally enough, neither Ridley, Brockway or any other leader of the ILP faces up to a criticism of these theoretical achievements. Ridley’s thesis, if such it can be called, is composed of bits and pieces taken from the programmes and theories of a number of

fundamentally opposed currents in the working class movement. Ideas lifted directly from the SPGB[27] on the colonial question, from the anarchists on the state, from the Stalinists on Russia, a distorted idea here and there from the Trotskyists, and laid over with the confused conceptions of the centrists withal! And he tries to palm off this horrible mess as Marxism with the benediction of Fenner Brockway and the NAC of the ILP. It would require a volume to deal with the theoretical blunders and misconceptions which bristle in nearly every paragraph. Take this typical specimen of muddled thinking:

“Viewed from this angle, it is obvious that no fully socialist society, in the sense indicated above, could possibly have emerged from the activities of the earlier internationals to which allusion was made in the preceding section. In the time of the First International only a small part of Europe and America was either capitalist or democratic. (Outside Europe and America both capitalism and democracy were unknown). In the time of the Second International, imperialism and world capitalism had not yet exhausted their role; neither had yet ‘left off’. Whilst both the Third and Fourth Internationals were based, in effect, upon the social conditions of a pre-capitalist-feudal-autocratic Russian society.

“Thus, none of the aforementioned socialist internationals could have led to world socialism in the sense which Marxism exclusively attached to that conception. Their failure was, under the given conditions, inevitable. E.g. had they succeeded, their victory would have been progressive but not socialist. At the most, they could only have led to regimes of state-capitalism.”

What does this nonsense mean? That, had the Third or Fourth Internationals succeeded in conquering power in any of the major European countries they would have gone the way of Russia? But not even Ridley, far less the ILP has in the past disputed, or even now disputes, that even the degenerate Soviet State remains today a workers’ state, not a “state capitalist regime.” Or is Ridley perhaps stealthily hinting that Russia has gone state capitalist? He certainly should have informed the world of this in a less casual way. But even when one admits the reactionary military-police superstructure which Stalinism has

infamously imposed upon the Soviet Union, what does this prove in relation to the problem of a soviet Germany? The measures of repression taken by the Bolsheviks were not a question of principle but imposed upon them by the hostile imperialist environment and the backwardness of Russia. A victory for a socialist Germany after the last war, which was entirely possible, would have altered the whole relationship of forces throughout the world. Backward Russia in this war and in the years before it, has provided a wonderful example of the powers of socialist methods of production. A combination of the economy of mighty Germany and the resources of Russia would have been invincible both economically and militarily. It could but have been the prelude to the victory of the revolution in Europe and throughout the world. Such a victory would have led not to “state capitalism” but to the abolition of the state within a generation or so throughout the globe. It is painful to have to repeat such elementary Marxian propositions to those proposing to lay down “new” and infallible prescriptions for a new international.

Ridley’s explanation of the failure of the internationals is certainly ingenious enough. They failed therefore the time was not ripe for them! A wonderful scientific reading of history, which he improves upon by telling us that even if they succeeded they would still have failed. But this does not as yet provide us with an analysis of the reasons for the defeats any more than the man who explained heat by saying that it was hot!

As if to reduce his views to absurdity, Ridley goes on:

“The next international mounts on the shoulders of History. It can actually do what the others promised. It arises in a continent (Europe) now unified by History – using Hitler as its blind instrument! – and in rapid process of industrial development. Led by a socialist Germany, a socialist France, and a socialist England, the united socialist states of Europe will for the first time in all history, fulfil the Marxist prerequisite for a genuine scientific socialist society.”

As usual, everything is stood on its head. The job the internationals failed to carry out is supposed to have been achieved by Hitler. As Trotsky would say Ridley confuses the brake with the locomotive of history, revolution with counter-revolution. In fact the position is precisely the opposite. Hitler's coming to power, the war, Hitler's victories in Europe are the result of the failure of the working class to carry out the tasks urgently posed by history; the failure of the working class (i.e. of its organisations) to abolish the contradiction between the development of the productive forces beyond national boundaries and the national state by progressive means, has led to an attempt at solution by reactionary means.

The formalistic, anti-Marxist outlook of Ridley and the ILP is expressed in the "three main purposes" of Ridley's projected "fifth" (in reality 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>) international:

"As it aims at the creation of a socialist society which starts on the basis of a finished capitalism it should confine itself to those parts of the world – primarily Europe, later, perhaps, the Americas – where the objective social conditions exist (e.g. in Asia and Africa the only kind of revolution possible is a predominantly agrarian anti-feudal revolution of the Russian type, which can, at best, only end in state capitalism and dictatorship, since the objective conditions for scientific socialism – viz. the abolition of economic scarcity and political democracy – do not exist. The European world has so long a start that, for the 20th century, a socialist Europe, no longer torn by civil war, must continue to lead the world.)"

It would be difficult to find in any revolutionary writings a paragraph which exposed such complete bankruptcy in the conception of world history and the method of historical materialism. Ridley once wittily referred to the SPGB as a Victorian survival. It would be hard for even this sect to produce a statement such as this, from whom of course it is derived.

Brockway for sentimental reasons comes nearer the correct policy than the "Marxist" Ridley, when he rejects this section of the document relating to the

colonial question. It is almost a century since Marx pointed out the interdependent character of world economy which it was capitalism's historic task to develop. Since that time, particularly in the last few decades with the development of imperialism, and the emergence of new techniques, this position has been emphasised.

Even Churchill, Roosevelt, Hitler and other bourgeois politicians understand this better than Ridley. The world has become a single economic unit and because of this, events in one continent immediately have political and economic repercussions in every other. Incredible that Ridley has not seen the social implications of the global war to which he so often refers. The sheer Victorian-European ("white") arrogance with which Ridley divides those privileged advanced countries ready for socialism, which his international will condescend to honour with a section from those benighted countries to be cast into the nether darkness till they are economically ready to have its attention is only matched by his ignorance of the world historical process in the past decades. Even the reformist Second International did not go so far as this. While in reality confined to Europe it paid lip service to the struggle for liberation of the colonial peoples and for the work in the colonies.

Ridley is afraid that revolutions in colonies will end in state capitalism and dictatorship on the lines of the revolution in Russia. Even granting that this is so, would not this be a tremendous step forward in comparison with the slavery of the colonial peoples today? Ridley, the historical "authority" is apparently against "bourgeois" revolutions in the East today, though willing enough to accept completed revolutions from the past. We would remind him that neither the French nor British revolutions were achieved "democratically" or through "libertarian" means but through bourgeois dictatorship. In any event, by implication Ridley is condemning the Russian revolution without stating this openly. He wishes to throw out the Soviet revolutionary baby with the dirty Stalinist bathwater. But far from being a reactionary event, the Russian revolution remains the greatest event in human history. And what alternative was there for Russia? A failure on the part of the Bolsheviks to seize power would have led to economic stagnation and the colonisation of Russia by the other great powers.

Ridley overlooks one of the great progressive achievements of the Third International and its founders. It would appear that he has not read or understood the writings of either Lenin or Trotsky. While the problem of the revolution in the colonies was not developed by Marx (though in advance he riddled the Ridleyian conception by showing that a successful revolution in China would automatically lead to a revolution in the developed countries of the West) it received detailed attention and study from those revolutionary theorists who worked out its basic laws. On this never a word from the light minded Ridley. Even if we accept as correct, which broadly speaking is true, that revolution in Europe is coming in the next period, the fate of such revolutions will at least be partly determined by the explosions it will produce in Asia, Africa and other colonial and semi-colonial countries. One of the expressions of capitalism's historic impasse is that social disturbances and revolutions in any part of the globe immediately react on the other continents as well; there is not one continent or country in which explosive material has not been accumulated. Lenin, in his analysis of imperialism showed that the road to revolution in the West lay in destroying the source of the super-profits for capitalism in the East, the means whereby "corruption" of the Western workers was maintained. Ridley talks about "corruption" of workers in the West but is apparently against destroying the basis of this.

However, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution shows Ridley to be a crude scholastic of the worst type. (If Ridley had studied the works of "dead" revolutionaries, he would not derive his ideas from men who have been politically dead for years). Trotsky shows that the process of social evolution is not at all a mechanical and rigid one. Because of the intervention of imperialism in the colonial areas, the development of these countries proceeds on different lines to the history of Britain, France and the other advanced states. The imperialists attempt to maintain the old feudal relations and prevent a "normal" development along capitalist lines. The capitalists of backward countries, because of the belatedness of their development are inextricably entangled with the landlords, the semi-feudal regime and with the imperialists. Any movement of the masses which threatened the imperialists or the landlords would almost automatically assume anti-capitalist tendencies at the next stage, besides which the capitalists are economically integrated with the landlords and would be hard



hit by any incursions on their property. Thus the bourgeoisie in backward and colonial countries is incapable of carrying through the bourgeois revolution. It is this development of world history which made the October revolution in Russia possible. The fact that the bourgeoisie, having ceased to play a progressive role, the bourgeois-democratic revolution can only be carried out by a conquest of power by the proletariat. The tens and hundreds of millions of the peasantry, history has demonstrated conclusively, are incapable of playing an independent role. They can only support and follow the lead of some other class in the cities to achieve their aims. As the bourgeoisie cannot fulfil the revolutionary role they did in the past, the leadership of the peasantry now falls to the young and vigorous proletariat. But having attained power, the proletariat cannot stop at the democratic tasks, including the breaking up of the large estates and the division of the land among the peasantry, but will inevitably turn towards socialist measures, expropriation of the capitalists, etc. But this in its turn, will come up against the weak and backward character of the economy. The sole solution lies in the extension of the revolution to the more advanced countries. Hence the naming of the process the permanent revolution.

Trotsky was writing on this in 1903. The October revolution and events in Spain, India and China have completely confirmed the correctness of this theory. But all that the cowardly centrist can see is that the state that issued from the Russian revolution has degenerated. To draw the conclusion: not to extend the revolution and thus end the isolation – but to send the colonial masses – that is the greater part of humanity – to perdition... till they are economically ready for socialism. A position which the development of world imperialism has rendered impossible in any event. But as the revolutions in the West are at least partially dependent for success or failure on the movement of the masses in the East, this is tantamount to declaring socialism impossible of realisation anywhere. Not for nothing did Lenin say that the road to the revolution in Britain lay through Delhi. The doctrine that the revolution must inevitably come in Europe first is not only false, but pedantic and utterly devoid of any dialectical content. Nowhere is it written that the proletariat of Germany must come to power before the proletariat of China, or the proletariat of Britain before that of India. True it is that a revolution in the East, though it would immediately purge society of the feudal rubbish accumulated over centuries, and if only for that reason would be completely justified, could nevertheless not stand on its own resources for a long period of time. But it would provide an enormous impetus to the revolution in

Europe and America, to whose proletariat the Eastern peoples would look for assistance and succour. The revolution is as indivisible and inter-connected as the war itself. Revolution in Europe means revolution in Asia – and the Americas – and also vice-versa.

In an attempt to cover his false position, Ridley goes on to say:

“Hence, whilst encouraging and supporting all non-European progressive revolutions, we do not identify our socialist revolution with progressive non-socialist ones, as has been done so disastrously in the era of the Russian revolution which ended with the dissolution of the Comintern and the assassination of Trotsky. The new international drops the vague and too ambiguous title – ‘world revolution’ – and concentrates on the – ‘united states of Europe’. It is, actually, a distinction without a difference, for who wins Europe today wins the world tomorrow!”

The above analysis should have disposed of this artificial conception, which attempts to separate the fate of Europe from that of the rest of the world and contains a sharp “distinction” and a sharp “difference” with Marxism on the problem of the colonial areas.

Having disdained to examine the programme and principles of the Fourth International, which represents the application of Marxism to the modern epoch, Ridley and the ILP proceed to adopt ideas in the name of “Marxism” at that which date back not to the pre-Bolshevik epoch, but are even pre-Marxian. Says Ridley, and in this he has the warm support of Brockway and the NAC:

“Our slogans must be suited to this so changed atmosphere (hatred of totalitarian stateism and of war). As dialectics, Marxism has no use for outmoded thought-forms and outdated slogans. For example, to make a revolution against

(bourgeois) dictatorship in the name of ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ would be worse than futile. Contrarily, it is necessary to borrow heavily from anarchism and syndicalism emphasising the slogans of ‘workers’ control’ against bureaucracy, personal liberty against state regimentation, socialist ethics against the cynical amorality of fascist and Stalinist gangsters. Full anarchism (or anarchist-communism) is, indeed, impossible whilst the state remains, but each form of society leans towards its successor, and socialism can immediately where once its scientific prerequisites already exist, begin, already, to lean towards its eventual anarchist-communist successor.”

What this mass of confused and contradictory ideas means, not Ridley himself could explain. If he means that the state will be only a transitional one till socialism is realised, (what is this nonsense about anarchist-communist successors?) that would merely be the orthodox-Marxist way of regarding the problem. If he believes that socialism could immediately be introduced even in Europe or the United States, that is not economically possible. The state will continue to exist in the period after the seizure of power and only gradually “wither away” into socialism. Ridley confusedly agrees that the state will remain in the first period after power has been achieved by the workers. But to repeat the ABC of Marxian ideas which Ridley does not seem to understand, the state is an instrument of oppression of one class over another, it is the guardian of inequality and its existence presupposes that the economic basis for the complete abolition of classes has not yet been achieved. Under capitalism, the state is the instrument of the capitalist class and is used for the suppression of the workers. When the workers take power they must smash the bourgeois state and replace it with one of their own, based on the workers’ soviets. And such a state cannot but be a “dictatorship”. Ridley cannot have it both ways. Either he supports the idea of a state which must mean some form of coercion (i.e. dictatorship) or rejects it completely and thus must embrace anarchist doctrine. In this case he should come out openly against Marxism. For the question of the nature of the state before and after the conquest of power is one of the decisive criteria which separates Marxism from all other tendencies in the labour movement. Just as bourgeois democracy cannot be anything else but the dictatorship of the capitalist class so such a state can only be the “dictatorship of the proletariat.” If Ridley means that we should reject the Stalinist caricature, that has long been a tenet of Bolshevism. But the Bolsheviks put in its place the idea of “workers’ democracy” a democracy of the toilers as opposed to the democracy of the rich

as it was in the early days of the Soviet Union. There is no need to borrow half-baked anarchist ideas. Revolutionaries, if they are to be successful, must stick to the scientific method of Marxism. And whatever its form, which may vary from one country to another, the rule of the workers cannot be anything else but the dictatorship of the proletariat. With the victory of the workers in Europe such a dictatorship would be very light, guaranteeing full freedom of speech, press, etc., even possibly to the bourgeois parties, certainly to all parties accepting the Soviet system, as a return to capitalism would be almost out of the question. But this is purely a question of expediency, not of principle. The much slandered Bolsheviks on whom Ridley by implication, pours his quota of slime, did not at all begin with ruthless measures. Even the liberal press was not suppressed. Only when the existence of the soviet state was menaced by internal counter-revolution and world-wide capitalist intervention, did the Bolsheviks reply with the red terror to the terror of the white guards. We stand unreservedly with the Bolsheviks against the mawkish sentimentality of Ridley & Co. The Bolsheviks have provided the world working class with an example to be followed in the coming revolutions if they are not to go under in a new wave of capitalist barbarism. The history of Europe since the last war is a warning of what happens to the working class if they stop half-way on the revolutionary road and do not take the necessary precautions and even reprisals against the capitalists and their henchmen. Hitler, Mussolini and Franco have shed rivers of workers' blood and left the flower of the working class to rot in jails and concentration camps-throughout Europe. Against capitalist barbarism and with the future of civilisation itself at stake the working class will not stop, short of the most ruthless steps if necessary to preserve their rule by workers' dictatorship.

To tie their hands in advance could only be the advice of a centrist. There is no need to borrow from the anarchists on the other points mentioned by Ridley either, they are all comprised in the philosophy of Marxism and can be found in the works of the "dead" Lenin and Trotsky.

Trotsky writing with infallible Marxian instinct had picked on this question long in advance in criticising the theoretical conceptions of centrism. He realised that the centrists had queasy stomachs easily upset by the slightest difficulties and would inevitably conclude from the Stalinist experience, not the correct lessons,

but the abandonment of the idea of a firm holding of power by the proletariat. Without the Bolshevik conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat history has shown that it is impossible for the proletariat to seize power. Ridley pretends to be scared only of the term; in reality he has scuttled away from the problem instead of facing it and in so doing placed himself in the camp of liberal-anarchism which bases itself on the rarefied air of “libertarianism” without reference to sordid material questions such as time, place and conditions under which the struggle for power is waged.

In his book *Whither France?*, Trotsky, in criticising the “left” member of the French Socialist Party, Zyromski who wished to “apologise” for being in favour of a “dictatorship” of the proletariat (Ridley unashamedly and with relief gives up the idea altogether without any apologies to Marxism whatsoever) wrote the following lines which constitute a complete refutation of Ridley’s position:

“For some reason or other Zyromski, in a whole series of articles, repeats with especial insistence the idea (moreover pointing to Stalin as original source) that ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat can never be considered as an end in itself.’ As if there were somewhere in the world insane theoreticians who thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat was an ‘end in itself’! But in these odd repetitions there lurks an idea: Zyromski is making his excuses to the workers in advance for wanting a dictatorship. Unfortunately, it is difficult to establish the dictatorship if we begin by apologising for it.

“Much worse, however, is the following idea: ‘This dictatorship of the proletariat must be relaxed and progressively transformed into workers’ democracy in proportion to the extent of the development of socialist construction.’ In these few lines there are two profound errors in principle. The dictatorship of the proletariat is set up against workers’ democracy. However, the dictatorship of the proletariat by its very essence can and should be the supreme expression of workers’ democracy. In order to bring about a great social revolution, there must be for the proletariat a supreme manifestation of all its forces and all its capacities: the proletariat is organised democratically precisely

in order to put an end to its enemies. The dictatorship, according to Lenin, should ‘teach every cook to direct the state.’ The heavy hand of the dictatorship is directed against the class enemies: the foundation of the dictatorship is constituted by the workers’ democracy.

“According to Zyromski, workers’ democracy will replace the dictatorship ‘in proportion to the extent of the development of socialist construction’. This is an absolutely false perspective. In proportion to the extent that bourgeois society is transformed into a socialist society, the workers’ democracy will wither away together with the dictatorship, for the state itself will wither away. In a socialist society, there will be no place for ‘workers’ democracy’, first of all, because there will be no working class, and secondly because there will be no need for state repression. This is why the development of socialist society must mean not the transformation of the dictatorship into a democracy, but their common dissolution into the economic and cultural organisation of the socialist society.”[28]

This quotation annihilates Ridley’s utopian socialist conceptions. It answers not only the nonsense of Ridley on the question of workers’ power but also the absurd idea that even in Europe socialism could be immediately introduced. If this were so then indeed the anarchists would be correct and the necessity for the state would disappear immediately after capitalism was overthrown. Ridley accepts the anarchist criticism of the dictatorship of the proletariat yet wishes to introduce socialism immediately and have a state in the transition period – not to socialism then but to Anarchism – into the bargain! What lucidity! What historical understanding! What social analysis! Ridley has no need to consult the works of Trotsky to get the unknown meaning, the meaning of Marxism is entirely unknown to Ridley.

Ridley sums up his erroneous conceptions:

“Any new international must, to pull its weight in the present world, politically

be (a) anti-capitalist and not merely anti-feudal, like its historic predecessors; (b) economically post-capitalist, based on the already solved problem of production (by capitalism) and aiming in its social and economic philosophy at the solution of the socialist problem of consumption rather than the already achieved capitalist problem of production; and (c) in opposition to all dictatorship must be libertarian, ethical and democratic.”

“...it cannot be repeated too often that ‘socialism in our time’, in this generation, is only possible in the post-capitalist, post-democratic soil already cultivated by Western (bourgeois) civilisation; and it is to the conquest of this that a new international must direct its primary energies.”

“It cannot be repeated too often” that Ridley commits elementary errors that any green student of Marxist theory would not perpetrate. The three previous workers’ internationals were built on the basis of anti-capitalism. But to say that the new international must not be anti-feudalist is so much fantasy. In the greater part of the world, including the advanced countries of Europe, there are feudal survivals. Are we to wait for capitalism to abolish these before making the revolution? If so we would have to put off the revolution till doomsday. It should be obvious that all survivals from feudalism and even earlier periods will be finally destroyed by the workers’ revolution. History does not wait till the last feudal custom has been abolished before imperatively demanding the preparation of a new stage.

Ridley’s point (b) is also incorrect. Socialism, no more than any other system of society, is not a question merely of consumption, but of production. The socialist revolution is historically necessary above all because capitalism hampers the growth of the productive forces which have reached their limit, comparatively, under the capitalist system. If it was a question of utilising only the productive resources created by capitalism, there would be no future for socialism. But on the contrary, the freeing of the productive forces from the fetters of capitalism would lay the basis for an increase in the productive capacity undreamed of in former societies. Only an enormous increase in production would lay the basis

for the disappearance of the state. Apparently it is necessary to remind these utopians that it is necessary to produce before you can consume. An artificial separation on the lines suggested by Ridley is quite meaningless. Socialists are as much concerned with production as consumption.

Point (c) is just so much hot air but is positively dangerous insofar as it sows illusions as to the methods by which the workers can achieve their emancipation, in the usual petty bourgeois fashion placing on the same plane, workers' dictatorship and the dictatorship of fascism.

Brockway, in his comments on Ridley's memorandum betrays the same incapacity to face the problem as do all the centrists. When it comes to the question of the basis on which the new international is to be built, Ridley is nebulous. Brockway recognises the need to "prepare" for the new international at least in words. But his method of preparing is, to say the least, most peculiar. "First, we should continue to explore all possible contacts in all possible countries, with a view to preparing a nucleus to rally round the new international."

This sounds much like some Rotarian society, oozing good-will to all and attempting to maintain "international" connections. It should be obvious that before an international party (or a national party for that matter) can be built, there must be at least a basic agreement on policy and principles. The collapse of the London Bureau was determined by the fact that the parties which composed it did not have a common principled position on the fundamental problems of our time. Now Brockway's method of issuing questionnaires much on the lines of an inquiry to decide which brand of beer is preferred by the public, might be a good test for the latter, but is certainly not a method of building an international. The ILP here faithfully continues in its centrist tradition. Nothing is laid down, nothing fixed in advance. Questions are addressed to all sorts of dubious individuals, grouplets and parties and what questions! There is not one that contains any real Marxian content which would help to demarcate reformists from revolutionists, muddle heads from those who know where they are going



and how they intend getting there. Take a couple of examples:

“What do you regard as the reasons for the failure of the Second and Third Internationals? Why is it that the Second International was so ineffective in influencing political events whilst its industrial counter-parts, the International Federation of Trades Unions and perhaps particularly the International Trade Union Centres (like the International Transport Workers’ Federation, Textile Workers and Miners) appear to have been more effective? Do you think the first step towards international working class unity would be to concentrate on the strengthening of international trade union organisation (e.g. the formation of an all-in federation, including the Russian trade unions, the CIO, etc.) and the extension of international centres for trade unions in particular industries rather than on a socialist international?”

What is meant by the trade union internationals being more effective than the Second International and achieving more results, it is not given to ordinary mortals to understand. And how it can be suggested that the Russian “trade unions” which long ago ceased to be trade unions in any sense of the word and became mere appendages of the Stalinist bureaucratic regime would strengthen internationalism is more than a mystery. But it follows naturally from the unclear conceptions of centrism. They howl about the amoral dictatorship of Stalinism one day, only to prepare as in this case to embrace its tools disguised as trade union leaders, the next.

Another sample:

“What elements do you think should be invited to collaborate in preparation for a new international? Revolutionary socialists only? Social democrats? Communists? Trotskyists? Anarchists? Syndicalists? Reformist trade unionist organisations? Co-operative organisations.”

It should have been clear to the merest political child that all these tendencies are mutually incompatible and fundamentally opposed to one another. To attempt to reconcile them is impossible. Anyone who has not learned the fundamental distinction between Bolshevism (Trotskyism) and the other tendencies in the last two decades, has learned nothing from history. This is emphasised by the next point:

“Do you think there should be a fundamental basis, defining both the socialist objective and policy? Is a statement of socialist objective necessary in view of the experiences of Nazism and of developments in the Soviet Union? For example, do you think it necessary to emphasise the democratic, libertarian and equalitarian aspects of socialism? Do you think the time is ripe for a synthesis of the Marxist and anarchist conceptions of social structure?”

After the shameful betrayal of its so-called principles by anarchism in the Spanish revolution, one could expect the petty bourgeois utopianism of anarchism would be exposed clearly for all claiming to be Marxist. To try to unite fire and water would be much more simple than the feat of uniting anarchist chimeras with Marxist science. All the other questions in this questionnaire are of similar character.

However, Brockway's comments, as does the questionnaire referred to, flow from the conceptions developed by Ridley. In dealing with his questionnaire, Brockway remarks with pride: “The responses which we have already had to our communications [obviously on the lines of this questionnaire – EG] are encouraging and the possibilities of this exploration have only been begun.” Very likely. A document which says nothing and commits to nothing, is something which any reformist or opportunist can support. Presumably Brockway has received encouraging responses from the “brother party” in the USA, Norman Thomas' Socialist Party which merely differs over the trifling question of the war – they support the Allies while Brockway claims to oppose the war. Or the new party in South Africa which has been so enthusiastically hailed by the New Leader – opportunist through and through – which not only

supports the war but speaks for the white minority only, also a mere detail that the ILP disagrees with. Says Brockway:

“...it is important, that during the period before the mass movement towards a new international arises, international socialists in all countries should be thinking out again their ideas of socialism and the best organisational basis for a new international. We must not aspire to lay down any theoretical basis in its final form, but it will be a valuable thing if socialists in different countries are pooling their ideas so that out of this exchange of opinion a restatement of socialism can be contributed to the discussion when a new international comes ‘on the map’.”

An organisation that was seriously Marxist, if it wished to inaugurate an international discussion on the way the new international should be built, would lay down the principles and ideas which it considered the experience of the last period had demonstrated as valid. It would attempt to sharply differentiate the sheep from the goats; revolutionists from reformists and syndicalist confusionists. That is the method of Trotsky, and the method with which Lenin built the Communist International – when it was revolutionary. In predicting years in advance the debacle of the London Bureau, when a Marxist analysis of its principled or rather lack of principled basis enabled him to discern its inevitable fate, Trotsky wrote:

“A ‘revolutionary’ resolution for which the opportunists could also vote was deemed by Lenin to be not a success but a fraud and a crime. To him, the task of all conferences consisted not in presenting a ‘respectable’ resolution, but in effecting the selection of militants and organisations that would not betray the proletariat in the hours of stress and storm.”

And in this is summed up the only sound method of laying the basis for mass parties of the working class which can lead the toilers to victory.

After solemnly repeating most of Ridley's errors, Brockway attempts to tackle the question of the organisational basis of the international, and in doing so finds himself on the horns of a dilemma of peculiar centrist construction.

“The Second International failed organisationally because it was not much more than a discussional body afraid to give a lead to any of its sections...”

“An international ought to be able to express the considered view of the international working class movement to its different sections, and different sections ought to pay very considerable regard to the lead given in this way.”

“The Communist International, on the other hand, failed because it was too rigid in organisation. Its policy and finance were dominated by the Communist Party of Russia and all other sections had to turn as it ordered. This is the other extreme which must be avoided. We must think out a basis of organisation which is between these two; and, which is realistically a reflection of the degree to which national sections in their present stage of development are likely to accept a lead from an international centre.”

Brockway has not realised that fundamental political questions must be reflected in organisational method. Fundamentally differing political tendencies cannot be reconciled within the framework of a single organisation either nationally or internationally, but sooner or later must be torn apart when the question of action arises. All tendencies are tested in the fires of the class struggle which brooks of no evasion or subterfuge. Thus a genuine proletarian international can only be built on the basis of agreement on the question of principles. This in itself presupposes that all questions of major political importance which vitally affect the policy of the national parties, should come up for international discussion and decision. While of course, a great amount of flexibility, especially on secondary questions, is desirable, this should not affect the basic issue. An

international should not be a post-bag to which one politely sends reports of decisions. Nor an international congress a fraternal meeting where the progress of the different sections is merely recorded. In Lenin's day the Comintern was a live body, where after full discussion of disputed questions throughout the sections, final decisions were referred for international discussion and decision to the world conference, where important questions were fully discussed for days and sometimes weeks. The international was a live democratic organisation and not at all "rigid in organisation" in the sense of being bureaucratically controlled. True it is that the Russian party possessed an enormous and even predominant influence in the councils of the international. But this was a political influence, due to the tremendous experience and authority of the Bolshevik Party. Lenin always insisted on thorough democratic discussion on all questions. And while inflexible on questions of principle, always preferred where possible to convince comrades by experience on questions of tactics. The later degeneration of the Communist International began as a political degeneration which reflected itself in organisational method as well. Thus, from democratic discussion and decision, bureaucratic decisions were decided on in advance, and all voting decisions became merely meaningless gestures, till the Communist International ended up with the totalitarian "unanimous" decision on all questions. But to compare the organisational methods of the Comintern in Lenin's day with those of decline under Stalin, or even Bukharin and Zinoviev, and to argue that they were the same could only be done by a centrist who wished to reject all international discipline. Or perhaps Brockway is still smarting with the recollection of the conditions for membership which the international proposed to apply to all parties proposing to affiliate? These principled conditions clearly laid it down for all to see those parties which really wished to take the road of revolution and those who refused to break once and for all with reformism. It is interesting to note after all these years, with their rich experience of vicissitudes and crises for the ILP, after wobbling many times in policy, sometimes moving right, sometimes moving left, that they have gone back to the position of the ILP of 1920: rejecting one of the fundamental principles of Marxism, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Brockway wishes to have his cake and eat it, to be part of an international without accepting any responsibility for its decisions and to accept the results of the international's deliberations. Brockway's is a typical evasive and vague formulation of the question which ties any organisation accepting it to nothing.

“An international ought to be able to express... different sections ought to pay very considerable regard...” How much is very considerable regard? What is it supposed to mean? Exactly nothing! Perhaps like the ILP itself the international should explain its views to the national section which will listen with “considerable regard” and then proceed to carry on as usual with its own policy, much as the ILP behaves in its internal working or as the London Bureau proceeded in the days when it pursued a fictional existence.

That this is what Brockway really means, is shown by his criticism of the Communist International. “We must think out a basis of organisation which is between these two...” Neither Brockway nor any other mortal could resolve the contradiction which is posed by this idea. Only centrists who live in a world of make-believe, or cloudy phrases and ideas would even pretend to suggest that it is possible. Marxism-Leninism showed the method of building the party nationally and internationally: on the basis of democratic centralism. Brockway puts the issue beyond doubt by leaving the back door open in advance: “...a basis of organisation [must be thought out] which is realistically a reflection of the degree to which national sections in their present stage of development are likely to accept a lead from an international centre.” If the individual sections have not developed into or as one international party, why pretend that an international exists? Far better to declare openly that there is no basis for an international at all than participate in a farce of this nature.

The Second International and its sections would gladly have accepted such an interpretation of “internationalism”. It differs in nothing essential from the very practice which Brockway criticises. It leaves the door open to every sort of abuse. Who is to decide “realistically” anyway?

It is clear that the conceptions of the ILP on revolutionary organisation are as vague and woolly as their ideas on revolutionary policy. The world situation poses more imperiously than ever before the necessity for a revolutionary vanguard on an international scale. An international which bases itself on the principles worked out by Marxism. It is not a question of a number, but to repeat

the idea developed by Trotsky so long ago. The international “is not at all a ‘form’ as flows from the utterly false formulation of the ILP. The international is first of all a programme and a system of strategic, tactical and organisational methods that flow from it.”

*Comrades of the ILP study our documents in the light of events, examine again the ephemeral and contradictory ideas developed by the ILP leadership in conference documents in the last few years. A thorough and honest analysis will convince you that only under the banner and with the programme and method of the Fourth International can victory be obtained.*

# Churchill's support crumbling

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5, No. 19, March 1944]

Recent by-elections have been significant of the trends of mass opinion in Britain. The strain of four and a half years of war, and the activities of the ruling class and the government in this period, are beginning to have their effect on the masses. The profiteering and racketeering of the capitalists at home, and their cynical deals with the fascist gangsters such as Badoglio abroad, have begun to disillusion the masses as to the aims and aspirations of the ruling class.

More than anything else, broad sections of the workers are dreading the results of the war in its effect on their conditions and living standards in the post-war period. The workers remember very well the aftermath of World War I, when Lloyd George's "land fit for heroes to live in" was transformed into the land of mass unemployment, the means test, and low wages for millions.

These are the issues that are dominating the by-elections at the present time. As the Observer has commented on the by-election in Bury St. Edmunds, a former safe Tory seat:

"The people themselves, after fifteen years of political slumber, are awakening to a very sober consciousness."



And the issues which concern the electorate of even a semi-feudal backwater such as this are “Beveridge, housing, agriculture,” i.e. the social and economic conditions of the masses in the coming period.

Even in such a constituency the Conservative candidate has only been able to scrape home by 2,500 votes, where formerly the seat was safe enough for the Tories to go uncontested.

The results in the other constituencies are even more revealing: in Brighton, a safe Conservative seat, the personal intervention of Churchill failed to secure the election of the government nominee. This is an indication that the myth that has been built around his name is already losing its grip on the masses. Skipton, another agricultural area, revealed the trend of the masses; here the Common Wealth candidate, standing on the platform of nationalisation of the land, secured the support not only of the agricultural labourers, but a large section of the small farmers as well.

The victory of Alderman White, the ex-Labour candidate who resigned from the Labour Party in order to contest the seat at West Derbyshire, was an even greater blow to the Tories and the government; his poll exceeded that of his opponent by over 4,500 votes.

All these blows against the government are blows against the Labour leader’s policy of coalition with the capitalists. Thus all the efforts of the Labour and trade union leaders, and of the Labour ministers in government, to hamstring the movement of the masses, have been of no avail against the rising tide of disgust and discontent.

As significant, or even more significant, than the other elections, has been the result in Kirkcaldy. In this working class stronghold the Labour candidate received only 8,000 votes – only 1,600 more than a candidate standing on the reactionary and puerile programme of the Scottish Nationalist Party, while a candidate standing for “Christian socialism” received 1,100 votes. This was a sharp revelation to the Labour leaders of the real feelings of the rank and file. The workers are becoming more and more critical of the deeds of the Labour leaders in government, and are seeking an alternative policy; the vote for Scottish nationalism was a gesture of despair.

From this, one thing stands out clearly: the masses are moving in one direction while the Labour and trade union bureaucracy are moving in another. The so-called political truce – in reality a political capitulation – is already shaking. Faced with this situation, the Labour Party Executive and the Labour ministers called a special meeting to discuss the position; instead of giving an inspiring lead, they decided to continue the coalition. According to the Daily Telegraph report: “The extent of such support (for Tory and Liberal candidates at by-elections) will be left to local decision.” This cowardly gesture was taken only because of the obvious impossibility of forcing the local Labour workers to carry this out, and the inevitability of a revolt within the rank and file of the Labour Party against its leaders.

The movement to the left has been clearly revealed in the by-elections. Yet here only the older people have voted, because of the outdated register; the vote of a whole new generation would be even more in the direction of the left. Not only at home, but even in the forces, the workers are heartily fed-up with the Tory Party of big business. A mock election in Cairo, in a Forces Club, gave 17 to the Tory, 38 to the Liberal, 55 to Common Wealth, and 119 to the Labour Party. These figures are astonishing! The vote for Common Wealth in the army, as in Britain itself, is an indication of the leftward movement of the middle-class, which is leaning towards socialism. But this is not the only indication of the process of radicalisation.

Even sections of the capitalist press have commented on the widespread development of support for Communism among large sections of the population, especially the youth. The pressure has been so great that the strike-breaking and pro-government Communist Party leaders have been compelled to alter their policy of support for Tory candidates and support for their opponents at by-elections.

Never in history have the masses been so ready for a fighting lead! A campaign for a general election and for the putting into force of a socialist programme by the trade union and Labour leaders would win the overwhelming support of the workers in the factories and in the army; the middle-class could also be won over on a fighting programme, as has been proved by recent events. A socialist appeal could pave the way for the coming to power of the Labour Party with an overwhelming majority of the people behind it. The coming to power of Labour on a socialist programme, and the carrying through of such a programme, would strike a death blow at the Nazis; all reports from Germany indicate that the German masses are only holding on because of their fear of the victory of Anglo-American imperialism.

The imperialists expect desperate resistance from the German soldiers when the second front is launched. One of the members of the government recently proclaimed in a speech that the casualties of the second front for the British troops would be as high as the ghastly slaughter of Passchendaele and the Somme in the last war[29]. And the workers, by their votes, have already shown that they are beginning to realise what the aftermath of “victory” will be for them. But a socialist appeal from the British workers would immediately arouse a response in Germany, and prepare the way for the overthrow of Hitler by the aroused workers of Germany and Europe.

The Workers’ International League stands for such a programme. The Labour leaders could take power, almost without resistance from the ruling class. They are holding the workers back! But in the coming days events will break the truce. As the first step towards the workers taking power, it is necessary that the

Labour leaders end their shameful capitulation to big business. Side by side with the workers, the WIL will fight for such a position. In the struggle we are confident that we will convince the workers of the correctness of our position.

Labour workers! It is time to end the farce of “national unity” with the monopoly capitalists! The Tories have no mandate from the people. The by-elections show that they have lost the confidence of the masses. End the truce! For a general election! Labour to power on a socialist programme!

# **ILP conference**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, vol. 5 no. 21, Mid-April 1944]

The ILP conference this year was marked by the steady move to the right on the part of the leadership.

As usual with the ILP conferences, there was no real attempt by the leadership to sharpen out and clarify the political perspectives and tasks of the working class at home and abroad. It was marked also by confusion and lack of clarity on the political issues involved, even by the advanced elements among the rank and file.

The burning urgency of the fact that Britain is entering a period of class struggle and class battles unexampled in British history, of which the recent wave of strikes are but the first skirmishes, should have been the keynote of the discussions.

As a self-styled revolutionary socialist party, it should have been the duty of the ILP leadership to raise this problem before the membership in the sharpest possible manner in order to prepare them for the task of giving leadership to the elementary movement of the masses. But, apart from anything else, it was apparent that the centrist leadership of the ILP was incapable of understanding the nature of the process taking place, and of the stern and stormy period ahead,

with all its dangers and opportunities.

This was emphasised by the attitude towards the attack of the capitalist government on the Trotskyists and trade union militants. Virtually the whole of the ILP rank and file instinctively recognised that such an attack was directed against the rights and liberties of the working class, and particularly of those making a stand for revolutionary socialism. They were heartily in favour of associating themselves with the Trotskyists. Particularly was this so of the revolutionary left-wing of the ILP, who demonstrated courage and resolution on this question. Such comrades as Alec Auld of Newcastle, Ted Fletcher of Birmingham, and Bill Loughlin of Armley showed that they were not in the least afraid of standing shoulder to shoulder with the Trotskyists in the face of capitalist attack. The leadership seemed to be terrified at the prospect of being associated with, or labelled as, "Trotskyists", and while prepared to offer assistance and support to the arrested comrades as individuals (which is a very progressive step, of course), they were not prepared to show open solidarity with them as the representatives of a political tendency.

One of the Leeds delegates exposed the manoeuvring of the Standing Orders Committee in excluding mention of the political tendency, affected in the protest resolution on the attack on the young comrades arrested in Newcastle. Of all the ILP leaders, John McGovern alone had the courage to show open solidarity with the Trotskyists; but he too refrained from giving mention to the Revolutionary Communist Party, as if by pre-arranged agreement with the NAC.

From the discussions, it could be seen that the leadership is preparing to return to the Labour Party at the earliest convenient opportunity, when under pressure of the masses, the political truce is broken.

This represents no great change for the leadership, which has basically remained a left reformist trend. However, the affiliation of the ILP to the LP would be definitely progressive. It would accelerate the emergence of a genuine

revolutionary left-wing within the ILP, and help to clarify, and thus demarcate clearly, the revolutionaries from the reformists within this party.

At the same time, it would serve to educate thousands of Labour workers who would join the ILP, if the left-wing were there to carry out this task and win them to the viewpoint of revolutionary socialism. Unfortunately, the left-wing is divided on this question, one section being unable to understand the dialectic of the process. The pacifist elements, however, have lost a great deal of the support they had in the past. But meanwhile, an openly clear-cut reformist wing has hardened itself out; Jimmie Maxton, Tom Taylor, and Carmichael being among its leading exponents.

This was graphically demonstrated when Taylor and others openly came out in support of UNRRA[30]. They argued that this organisation, set up by Anglo-American imperialism, had been organised purely for humanitarian reasons to feed the starving people of Europe! As if the imperialists cared for anything but their own interests, and as if this organisation was not set up as a weapon of blackmail to starve the revolutionary workers, just as America and the Allies starved the Hungarian Soviet Republic and blockaded the Soviet Union after the last war.

The left-wing scored a decisive victory on the issue of Common Wealth. The resolution from North Birmingham and North-East Division of the ILP, declaring:

“This conference expresses its profound dissatisfaction with, and opposition to, the policy of the NAC in concluding an electoral agreement with the petit bourgeois pro-war Common Wealth Party.”

The main feature of the conference, and one which would give most concern to

that tendency in the ILP which is moving towards a new revolutionary socialist policy, is that not only is the ILP heterogeneous in policy and composition, but that the left-wing is also not homogeneous, firmly knit, and clear as to its aims and policy; here lies the real weakness of the left-wing. In great part, this left-wing reflects the new industrial members of the ILP, those attracted to the ILP by its anti-war stand, and those old elements of the ILP pushed towards the left by the events of the last years. They represent a healthy tendency within the party.

But the danger persists that unless this nucleus hardens itself theoretically, and prepares to struggle consistently against the open reformist and veiled centrist currents, it will disintegrate and become demoralised, thus striking a blow against the revolutionary movement as a whole. This tendency, in the long run, can only serve the movement by struggling for a clear revolutionary policy in the ILP, and thus prepare the way for a fusion of all the genuine revolutionary elements in Britain into one revolutionary party.

The struggle for theoretical clarity in its own ranks, and the effort to teach the best elements in the ILP, especially its industrial militants, the perspectives and tasks of the revolutionary current in Britain, must be the main task of the left-wing in the ILP in the next period.



# Bevin defends his anti-labour laws

By Ted Grant

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 22, May 1944]

There is a conspiracy in Britain at the present time, a vicious conspiracy by the capitalists to take away the rights of the working class under the guise of an attack upon Trotskyist “agitators”. And in this they have the wholehearted support of the top strata of the trade union bureaucrats.

*Hand in hand with the lynch campaign against the Trotskyists, has gone a campaign of slander and vilification against the miners, engineers, apprentices and other workers provoked into taking strike action by the policies of the employers and their government.*

The debate in Parliament on the new anti-strike, anti-labour laws has shown the meaning of these new regulations very clearly. Any miner or engineer knows that the recent strikes were not caused by “agitators” but by the stupid and arrogant attitude of the employers and of the government departments concerned. And not least by the high-handed and undemocratic actions of the trade union leaders, who made agreements bristling with anomalies and provocations without bothering to consult the men they were supposed to represent, to find out if they were in agreement with the conditions or not.

In preparing to launch an attack on the workers in 1924, the ruling class framed

the leaders of the Communist Party in the now notorious Campbell Case.[31] This was a preparation for the general strike which the ruling class was provoking. Today, in preparing to beat down the workers, the capitalists once again prepare to jail those who represent the interests of the workers – the communists, the genuine revolutionary communists are being arrested and persecuted.

Thus, this new law, Defence Regulation 1AA,[32] as has been openly stated, is aimed at the Revolutionary Communist Party because of the fear of the power of the ideas of revolutionary socialism which must gain greater and greater support from the working class in the days to come. Nevertheless, the wider implications of the new regulation reveal it as one of the biggest blows against the working class since the Combination Laws, and beside which the Trade Disputes Act seems a piece of amateur bungling in its efforts to hamstring the working class.

Mr. Neil Maclean, Labour MP for Govan assessing the position stated:

“All you need do now is to put into the Regulation authority for a Judge to transport people overseas to penal settlements and we shall be back to the days of the Tolpuddle martyrs. The minister of Labour is one of those who took part in a demonstration to celebrate the place of the Tolpuddle martyrs in trade union history, but he is now taking part in throwing back the trade union movement. Of course, the regulation satisfies a large number of Hon. Members who do not like trade unionism and think it should not be permitted. It was they who cheered when the Trades Disputes Bill was brought into the House, who welcomed it and voted [it] into law. Their successors are likely to walk into the lobby today and vote for the continuation of this Regulation which has already been established.”

But the peculiar feature of this new Regulation, and one for which it would be difficult to find an exact parallel in British trade union history, is the open recognition of the gulf that now exists between the union bureaucrats and the working class. A gulf which is to be bridged, not by the bureaucrats attempting

to regain the confidence of the workers, or consulting the workers before committing themselves to signing agreements with the employers, but by calling in the aid of the police to protect the bureaucrats from all “militants” and “unofficial” movements in the workshop.

Aneurin Bevan, who is close to these trade union bureaucrats was compelled to say:

“It is an astonishing situation to see Conservative members giving special legal protection not to trade unions but to trade union officials because it is trade union officials who are invoking the law against their own members. Do not let anybody on this side of the House think that he is defending the trade unions; he is defending the trade union official, who has arteriosclerosis, and who cannot readjust himself to his membership. He is defending the official who has become so unpopular among his own membership that the only way he can keep them in order is to threaten them with five years in gaol. Whenever you get the rank and file at trade union meetings this Regulation will be opposed. The General Council of the TUC, at the top, supports it, but the worker at the bottom opposes it. The further you get away from the trade union official to the rank and file, the less support the Regulation gets. The more you move away from reality, from the robust, dignified, normal worker, to the jaded, cynical, irresponsible trade union official the more support the Regulation gets. That is the situation.”

The effect of this law on the shop steward and trade union organisation in the factories, if carried out, would make any worker liable who suggested strike action – after negotiations have failed to give the workers any satisfaction. Any reaction by the workers to victimisation of shop stewards or convenors would make the workers liable to five years. If any worker indignantly threatened strike action against an arbitrary wage reduction, he would be immediately liable.

The new Regulation declares:

“No person shall declare, instigate or incite any other person to take part in, or shall otherwise act in furtherance of any strike, among persons engaged in the performance of essential services, or any lock-out of persons so engaged.”

The effect of this is to make any expression of sympathy or support for workers on strike punishable by five years imprisonment and a fine of £500. Further, anyone who takes, or advocates any action which can be construed as leading to a strike in any industry, at any meeting or discussion which is not an officially convened union meeting, makes himself liable to the same penalty. If the union bureaucrats continue to sign agreements with which the rank and file disagrees, a protest expressed other than through the official machinery of the union would make any worker voicing it guilty of the same offence. Any workers who protest outside a union branch against any agreements signed by trade union officials whether they have been consulted or not, could be proceeded against under the new Regulation, if it could be said that this might lead to strike action.

This is only one aspect of this vicious Regulation. It is intended to place the workers in the power of the employers, bound hand and foot. But the Tories could never, at the present time, have succeeded in getting away with such legislation without the active assistance of the trade union bureaucrats. The bureaucrats are calling in the assistance of the police against their own membership. If the trade union bureaucrats genuinely represented their members, or signed agreements they were confident would get the support of the workers, how could such a nightmare situation arise in the labour movement?

It is clear that the union leaders are expecting storms in industry in Britain in the future, not because of “agitators” but because of the unbearable strain and conditions to which the workers have been subjected. They propose to cure this, not by demanding “sacrifices” from the rapacious bosses, but by siding with the bosses and calling in the police to whip the workers into line. That is how they have degenerated!

## **The role of the Communist Party**

Because of the alarm and fear within their own ranks, and because of the tremendous opposition of the rank and file trade unionists throughout the country, the Stalinists have been compelled to offer demagogic opposition to the Regulation. Mr D. N. Pritt, Stalinist stooge in Parliament, analysed many flaws in the Act, but went on to say that it was not necessary to pass new laws against the Trotskyists. In reply to a jeer from Ernest Bevin, who asked if he wanted 18B, Pritt answered:

“Not only 18B but also 2D. The government, instead of supplying paper for the Socialist Appeal should stop the paper itself.”[33]

Thus, these traitors, who have sold out to the boss class, ask for police aid against their revolutionary opponents. This attitude of the Stalinists is particularly despicable in view of their agitation against 18B and the use of the emergency regulations to suppress the Daily Worker. Then we opposed with all our forces the use of reactionary legislation against any section of the labour movement, even if we disagreed with them completely. Because a blow at one section is a blow at the whole labour movement.[34]

But these renegades will resort to any measure to stifle the voice of revolutionary communism which tells the truth to the workers. 18B used against one section of the labour movement, the Trotskyists, could just as easily be used against the working class as a whole, once the precedent is established. Bevin made this clear in his speech when he showed that this legislation directed against Trotskyism today could be used against Stalinism as well, if Stalin changed his foreign policy, and his British flunkeys switched the line once again. Indeed, Bevin attempted to justify the Regulations as much by the future danger

of the Stalinists as against the Trotskyists.

Bevin:

“I did consider this Regulation a long time ago. I thought it would become inevitable. That was when this war was called an imperialist war, and I was getting strikes all up and down the country, without provocation, and by design. (An Hon. Member: ‘Were they Trotskyists?’) No, they were a majority, who suddenly decided that this war was not an imperialist war. The Trotskyists were ‘wee frees’, who did not accept that. At the critical moment this change came, and, in my anxiety not to introduce anything else, we went on without taking any further steps. Until this development took place, when the second front was really in danger, and when at the moment – and I say this with a great sense of responsibility – we cannot afford to have our industrial machine upset by the changes in diplomacy or anything else that is going on between governments. I say that with emphasis. We cannot afford to have shop stewards and other people turned on to us at a critical moment in this country’s history, whichever side it comes from...”

“I regard the life of this country as being at stake in this, because I believe that this country has the right to govern itself, and not to be governed by anybody else outside...”

Bevin has introduced this Regulation after consideration with the TUC tops, as he explains it “democratically” and because it “affects them.” But as usual, he has not consulted the rank and file trade unionists who are the ones to be affected. Thus, this government which has no mandate from the electorate passes this new tyrannical legislation into effect.

The endorsement of the Regulation was a foregone conclusion. What was

important was the number of Labour MPs who voted against – 23. And the number who abstained – 14. That is one third of the Labour MPs. This is a reflection of the pressure and indignation of the Labour workers. But by itself a vote in the House of Commons is worthless, without a struggle to extricate the labour and trade union movement from the stranglehold of big business. The coalition is responsible! Wage a campaign to end the coalition, must be the answer.

If the trade union movement is not to be destroyed, the workers must fight to restore democratic control over their officials. No trade union official should have a life-long job but must come up for re-election every two or three years. It is because the Trotskyists struggle for this programme that they are hated by the trade union bureaucrats. They fear for their jobs if it is left to a democratic decision of the workers.

*Fight in the unions, factories, and branches for the repeal of this, and all other anti-working class regulations, including the Trade Disputes Act!*

## **Labour leaders fear conference**

**by Ted Grant (Not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 5 No. 23, Mid-May 1944]

The Labour leaders have announced the cancellation of this year's Labour Party conference. The ostensible excuse for this is the warning of the Railway Executive Committee that it will be necessary to withdraw many more trains for military purposes.

But this excuse does not hold water, since many other organisations are holding their conferences as usual.

It is obvious that the leadership of the Labour Party has eagerly seized this pretext as a way out of a situation which even at best would be embarrassing and painful to them.

The opening of the second front would give added importance to a Conference of the representatives of the working class to discuss the issues whereby the fate of Europe is being decided. But the leaders are content to leave the fate of the workers in the hands of the capitalist class without giving the rank and file the opportunity to voice its opinions.



The real truth of the matter is that the leadership has seized the opportunity to avoid facing the rank and file delegates at this juncture. Throughout the country, in the unions and among the rank and file of the Labour Party, there is a tremendous revolt against the support by the Labour and trade union bureaucrats of the new anti-labour laws and a feeling of opposition to any measures of reprisal against the Labour “rebels.”

The leadership has followed this up by a demand for a statement from Aneurin Bevan that he will “in future loyally accept and abide by the orders of the Parliamentary Party.” In the event of a refusal the joint meeting of the NEC of the Labour Party and the Administrative Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party has recommended that Bevan should be expelled. The stiffening of the attitude of the Labour leaders after the Parliamentary Labour Party had accepted a compromise, is obviously connected with the decision to cancel the Labour Party conference.

The leadership has realised the depth of feeling which these issues have aroused among the Labour rank and file. A reaction which has been completely unexpected by the leadership. A conference now would possibly reveal a sharp reaction against the whole compromising policy of capitulation to the ruling class by the policy of coalition. So the leadership prefers to wait for what they imagine would be a better atmosphere for the putting over their reactionary coalition policy – possibly after the second front has been opened.

This treacherous manoeuvre of the Transport House bosses shows how much they are really concerned with democracy in the party and seeking the opinions of the rank and file on the major crisis within the Labour Party.

The Labour rank and file workers should demand the speedy holding of the conference at a suitable date. The cancellation of the conference in conjunction with the whole record of the Labour and trade union bureaucrats in the coalition seriously poses before the Labour workers the necessity for a serious struggle to

democratise and revitalise the Labour movement. Real democracy within the unions and the Labour Party can only be obtained by pushing the leadership on the road of a struggle for power against the capitalists.

Instead of directing their blows and reprisals against the left wing inside and outside the Labour Party within the working class movement, the leadership should be compelled to fight against the systematic attacks of the bosses on the standards of the workers. Either this or they should be driven out of the movement altogether. Either open MacDonaldism or the road of the crass struggle.

In the ending of the coalition with the capitalists, both industrially and politically lies the only means of reviving the Labour movement.

# **The attack on our party**

**By Political Bureau of RCP**

[Internal circular, May 24 1944]

The recent attack against our organisation, the arrest of our comrades and subsequent trial together with the introduction of Regulation 1AA, has raised new and wider perspectives before our party and forces upon us a new tactical orientation. After a series of fairly thorough discussions, the Political Bureau decided to issue certain preliminary directives as the basis for local discussions both in relation to our Labour Party and industrial work.

The attack on our party launched by Bevin has brought our tendency before the workers in a manner which would have been impossible to visualise a few years, or even months ago. The prosecution of our comrades, which is everywhere recognised as the persecution of our party, is a historical prosecution being the first under the Trade Disputes Act, and marks a landmark in labour history. The reaction of the masses to the use of the Trade Disputes Act is one of sympathy with our party, and acceptance (though they disagree with our policies) of the fact that we are the revolutionaries – that we are the militant communists.

The new anti-labour legislation 1AA was introduced into Parliament with a full day's debate and the main argument of the government was: this regulation is necessary to... combat the Trotskyists! The main opposition in the House of Commons to the anti-labour legislation – Bevan and Co., who received the undoubted support of the broad mass of the organised workers – comes to the defence (albeit weakly) of the Trotskyists. It can be said that the most significant

“revolt” and crisis in the Labour Party since the beginning of the war is linked to the attacks against the Trotskyists, to the attacks against the Revolutionary Communist Party.

At the fusion conference it was agreed that we had once again entered the bloodstream of the organised labour and trade union movement as a distinct political trend: but only just. Now we can say that we have entered the political arena not only as a party, but one which is acknowledged as the left revolutionary wing of the working class. In the minds of the broad masses there is a marked sympathy with us, although there is little or no active and hard support. There is, however, the recognition that we are being framed because we are the most militant political and industrial trend in the country. In the left wing of the ILP, the Labour Party, and trade union movement, and even to some extent in the ranks of the Communist Party, there is the beginning of an open recognition that the Trotskyists continue the communist policy and tradition.

On the defence committee, the British Trotskyists for the first time, have a platform together with the established left reformist and centrist leaders of the labour movement. This fact has the effect of positively integrating Trotskyism as part of the labour movement in the eyes of the most advanced workers.

A new and fertile field has opened up for us which can be described as the limited united front.

In the past we tended to emphasise, almost to the exclusion of every other consideration, our criticism of the left reformist trend. Our attacks against the right wing of the Labour Party were usually in passing. We considered they were sufficiently exposed to those workers to whom we were addressing ourselves. This helped to harden out the principled cadres of the movement and helped to destroy any illusions that new members coming from the mass movement still had in the left wing leaders of these organisations. But in one sense, it was also a product of our isolation. Our appeal was directed to a small, narrow circle of the

most advanced workers. But now our appeal is directed not only to the most advanced elements of the workers but to broader circles of left wing Labour supporters. An important part of our work in the present united front will be the skilful exposure of the reformists and centrists in deeds, but to slightly alter our method of approach, without, of course, withdrawing an inch from our principled political criticisms.

Our method of approach must be to bring out and emphasise the progressive aspect of the revolt of Bevan and the Labour lefts, and pose before the supporters of this trend the necessity to draw the logical conclusion from the steps which the lefts have taken against the reactionary right bloc. By this method we will place the responsibility on their shoulders for refusing to face up to the situation, and at the same time to explain the steps which we consider necessary for the left wing of the working class to take. Bevan and the lefts are the weathercocks of the labour movement. At present they sense the feeling of organised labour and reflect the pressure on part of the workers. Thousands of workers throughout the country have illusions in these lefts which will only be shattered by a process of patient explanation on our part.

It must be understood that we are dealing with capable reformists who are not amateurs at the game of “blocs”, united fronts, and manoeuvres, whereas we are entering this wider field for the first time, and with inadequate forces. We can therefore possibly make mistakes which can damage our future work. We must avoid such mistakes even if we are to make others of a rather sectarian character. If it were a question of a manoeuvre at the top and a bloc with the Bevan’s only, it would be lacking in principle and we would reject it at once. But there are thousands of the best elements in the ranks of the working class who look to these lefts for a lead and who have a genuine desire to combat the Trade Disputes Act and Regulation 1AA. It is with the purpose of integrating ourselves with these sections of the working class that we must throw the weight of our party and try to draw them fully into the struggle to combat the anti-labour laws and free our comrades.

To the extent that we can carry this out, we will raise the party onto a new level in its direct relations with the left elements of the working class. Such workers are openly hostile to the right wing of the Labour and trade union movement. But to destroy their illusions in the “lefts” it is not sufficient that we denounce Bevan as we have done in the past. It is necessary to be explanatory: to go through their experiences with them, calling on Bevan to match his words and gestures with deeds.

In joint work, and on the platforms with them, the method of approach will be decisive. Insofar as the limited task of combatting 1AA and the Trade Disputes Act is dealt with, our attitude must be aggressive. Stating our clear and hostile attitude towards the bourgeoisie, we must place the responsibility for the present situation, and particularly 1AA on the shoulders of the right wing of the labour movement. On a common platform, we should not, unless absolutely necessary, directly attack our allies of the day. We should however, do so at all times and in any case, by the statement of our positive policy: break the coalition, etc. It may be that while on that platform, it becomes necessary to make a negative criticism of our “allies”. Outbursts of downright chauvinism, criticisms of strikes, of militant activity or revolutionary propaganda would place the responsibility immediately on our shoulders to criticise what has been said. But in general, on a joint platform, the broader issue of the nature of the war will be pushed into the background at this stage of the limited united front. We will expose the “lefts” positively by pointing out that they can only carry the struggle to a successful conclusion by making a break with the coalition and rallying the working class in a struggle to place Labour in power on a socialist programme. In our press an important part of our material will continue to be devoted to a criticism of the “lefts”. But here too, our weight will be shifted from savage and downright denunciations towards pedagogical criticism and explanation.

In general, this limited united front will only be of value to our party if it brings us into closer contact with wider circles of the organised working class, and if we can draw broader sections of the advanced workers into common work with us. It may well be that in this will be the beginning of a real collaboration with the left Labour workers. On the other hand, it can easily die out, and very quickly too. Our tactics will evolve empirically as we gain experience in line

with the situation as it evolves. One thing is certain: we must seize the favourable opportunity to utilise what forces can be mobilised now. Party work must be mobilised around this issue.

## **Our industrial perspective in the light of 1AA**

It is an undeniable fact that the introduction of 1AA limits the legal activities of the Militant Workers' Federation and our party industrial work generally. Our industrial perspectives must therefore be seriously discussed, reviewed and revised. It is necessary to adopt a new tactical orientation, whilst maintaining that firm and militant stand which characterised our industrial activity in the past.

Whilst broadening the legal basis of the existing anti-strike legislation and thereby limiting the activities of all workshop militants, 1AA is aimed directly against the Militant Workers' Federation and similar organisations which seek to coordinate the militant industrial activities of workers in each district, between districts and on a national scale. One of the most important effects of the new law is to protect the trade union bureaucracy at the expense of the rank and file. It is now illegal to discuss or advocate strike action outside the branch room or official trade union organisation. It is now illegal to circulate resolutions of support other than through trade union branches or official bodies. It is now illegal to issue sheets for the collection of funds other than through the branches or official bodies. Insofar as strikes take place, and they undoubtedly will, support must be constitutional to be legal. We should make our fellow workers fully aware of these facts. We should hammer it into the consciousness of the sympathisers and members of the Militant Workers' Federation and its area organisations, although it should not stop us from collecting monies through the shop stewards' organisations and factory bodies.

In our conference resolution, relationship between the legal official and "illegal"

unofficial aspects of the policy of our industrial work was dealt with. The Militant Workers' Federation generally operated on the basis of our industrial perspectives. The principal function of the Militant Workers' Federation was the clarification of the industrial policies among the leading militants, the coordination of militant action from one district to another and the organisation of moral and financial support for workers who were on strike, together with the circulation of important information from area to area. The gains of the Militant Workers' Federation came from the coordination of militant activity and its assistance to workers in strike disputes, and not as such from the policy which was conducted inside the union. We must not minimise the importance of this consideration. 1AA cuts entirely across this form of activity by the MWF.

1AA has of course, not stopped illegal strikes – nor will it. Nor will it stop us aiding, through the factory organisations, workers who are forced to use the strike weapon. But the application of this latter form of assistance will demand skilful manoeuvring and real support among the workers. We could continue our work in the MWF as before and test the reaction of the workers to the attacks that the state would inevitably launch against the MWF and the militants associated with it. But this would be the worst sort of adventurism. It would be an ultra-left gesture which could only lead to the beheading of the leadership and the smashing of the growing left wing.

Our task is to retreat, but to retreat in good order.

The essence of a retreat in good order is that the leadership must fully understand why the retreat is necessary and have the full confidence of the broadest layers of its supporters. To achieve this, the supporters of the MWF must be made fully aware of the nature of the problems that are involved.

The main emphasis of our work must be shifted from the coordination of strike activity (directly) to the revitalisation of the trade union branches and district organisations. To the extent that we succeed in doing this, the duties normally



performed by the unofficial MWF can be performed through the official trade union machinery in the local and district organisations that the adherents of the MWF control. This will not be an easy task to perform. But it can and must be done.

The heavy hand of the bureaucracy still stifles the life of the trade union local and district machinery. But it is absolutely certain that in the next period the branches will be revived and show active organisation.

*It may be that the organised workers will sweep aside 1AA in practice: that the ruling class will be unable to apply this regulation with even the minimum of success... except to ourselves! But until such a situation arises, and whilst we have no practical demonstration of the mood of the workers, we are forced to adapt our tactics to the situation that exists.*

The essence of our task in the immediate period ahead is to struggle to convert the MWF into a national all-union militant minority. This does not mean the liquidation of the MWF. It means a shift in the axis of its activism from the coordination of extra-union work to that of coordinating and conducting the same form of activity through the union machinery.

The link up and coordination of shop stewards' and factory committees will be pursued as before. There is every reason why questions of policy should be thoroughly discussed and decided upon in these meetings. The stronger the penetration of the shop stewards' and factory committees, the less "terrible" threat of 1AA. But even less "terrible" from a legal point of view, is if the coordination can be carried out via the branches and district committees.

*Note: for the purpose of learning the lessons of the old Minority movement, led by the Stalinists – its mistakes and successes – the PB will instruct a comrade to*

*concentrate on research on this question.*

## **Statement to members from the Political Bureau**

**[Internal circular, June 22 1944]**

Dear Comrades,

The trial is over. Comrades Roy Tearse and Heaton Lee are in prison serving sentences of 12 months and Comrade Jock Haston is serving a 6 months sentence. Comrade Ann Keen was sentenced to 13 days which meant her immediate release.

The sentences are generally regarded in labour circles as monstrous in the light of the evidence brought forward.

As is known, the charges against the four were of “incitement” and “conspiracy” and acting “in furtherance of” an illegal strike. The fact that they were found not guilty on the conspiracy and incitement charges is a victory for us, particularly in the light of the vicious press campaign directly or indirectly accusing the comrades of instigating and inciting the Tyne apprentices’ and other strikes. It completely vindicates our declarations that we do not incite or conspire to bring workers out on strike, as the capitalist press and Labour, and Stalinist leaders were charging, but that the workers come out on strike only when they have a genuine and legitimate grievance. This was brought out beyond doubt in the course of the proceedings when one apprentice after another stated that they were bitterly hostile to the Bevin Ballot Scheme[35] and would have come out on strike if they had never met any of the accused.

All the comrades conducted themselves in the court in a manner worthy of our tradition. Each took every opportunity afforded him or her to present our political ideas and in a commendable way. Their behaviour in the witness box impressed all alike – the prosecution, the judge, the apprentices and visitors in the gallery. There were a number of apprentices watching the proceedings and after the four comrades had given their evidence, they were literally flushed with enthusiasm. Those who were previously hostile became friendly.

It was no doubt, obvious from the press reports, that the King's Counsel – Curtis Bennett – was not cooperating with the four comrades. Not only did he fail to assist them in drawing out their political position, which was of vital importance in this trial since it was clearly a political trial – but he failed to cooperate in bringing out their legal defence to the best advantage. It can be said that he did not put forward the legal arguments as well as our own comrades could have done themselves. It was considered at one stage in the course of the trial whether it would be advisable to dismiss Curtis Bennett and conduct the trial ourselves. However, there were many issues involved – the effects on the Defence Committee, the fact that the solicitors felt themselves obliged to walk out with counsel under these circumstances, the inexperience of our own comrades in court procedure and finally the importance of taking the question to the court of appeals and if necessary to the House of Lords for the trade union movement. All these things weighed against so drastic a decision – a decision which would have caused a sensation throughout the country.

In any future trials the comrades will have to seriously consider the conduct of their own case. In such an event it will be necessary to make a study of the legal procedure by the comrades on trial if we are not able to obtain a lawyer with our own political views or sympathetic towards them. Insofar as our policy was brought out it was in reply to the questions of the prosecution and not at all as a result of the questions of our own counsel. Naturally, as soon as the comrades' answers had the effect of making a good impression on the jury, which they undoubtedly did, the prosecution closed down.

They were not permitted to make a statement before sentences were passed, as this privilege is not accorded in cases of “misdemeanour” as it is in cases of a “felony.”

The verdict was considered by all who attended the court as surprising, in view of the bitter attack by the judge in his summing up speech which lasted nearly three hours. Although he pleaded that the jury should not be influenced by the political issues involved, he cunningly introduced such issues as the war precisely in order to prejudice them. He put a better case for the prosecution than did the prosecution itself, without analysing at all the evidence on behalf of the defence. Yet in spite of this the jury threw out the charges of incitement and conspiracy.

The charges on which they have been convicted are of “furthering a strike” declared illegal under the Trade Disputes Act, and aiding and abetting Davy. Although it has been ruled in a previous case in the House of Lords that a strike can only be furthered during the course of the strike and not before it, this ruling was completely ignored and it was upon evidence prior to the commencement of the strike [that] they were found guilty. It is this legal point on which the appeal is to be made. This decision sets a precedent of vital consequence to the trade union movement. For in future, any worker who does any act which can be construed by the capitalist court to “further” a strike before the strike takes place is open to conviction, and such construction can be placed on practically any act. This could be seen in the case of comrade Haston, for there was not a shred of evidence that he aided or furthered the strike before or during the strike. The only evidence against him was of organisational directive in the formation of the Tyne Apprentices’ Guild and of political directive in the issuance of propaganda leaflets calling for nationalisation of the mines as the only solution to the coal crisis which were issued before the strike was declared and in no way referred to strike action.

The establishment in the Court of Criminal Appeal of the definition of “furtherance” as meaning before or during a strike, or both, is a very important

question for the trade union and labour movement. Although this will cost an extra £1,000, it is an issue which must be fought out, if necessary to the House of Lords. In this it is necessary to redouble our efforts in raising the money through the organisations of the working class. It is necessary to bring the matter before every trade union branch and political meeting throughout the country either by personal contact or through circulars. Every comrade and every local in the party must display an initiative greater than heretofore, for this is an opportunity rarely presented on so clear cut a class issue. The demand for the release of the comrades must constitute the focal point of our campaign.

As the members know, the three comrades now incarcerated are all leading members of our party and each in his own way plays a vital part in the functioning and building of the party. It is true to say that in the present conditions it is impossible to replace these comrades in their particular sphere of work. In imprisoning these three comrades the party has undoubtedly been struck a severe blow by the capitalist class. Their absence can only be compensated by more determined and persistent efforts on the part of all members, especially the leading members.

We take this occasion to appeal to all comrades in the party to aid in accelerating the process of solidifying the members into one, united, homogeneous party. Our party must be built and can only be built on the solidarity, cooperation and loyalty of all members, regardless of any differences in tactics and policy. Solidarity with the comrades who are imprisoned can best be shown by intensifying the work of building the party. When they return from their enforced isolation, we are confident that they will come back to find the party more united, stronger and with more influence among the workers than when they went away. That is the answer of our party to the attacks of the ruling class: a fighting, united and integrated party carrying on the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and for the victory of the Fourth International.

In conclusion, we reproduce here the message sent by the three from their cells immediately following the sentence:

“We have been convicted and imprisoned because of our advocacy of the programme of the Fourth International. The trial has demonstrated clearly that evidence or no evidence, the capitalist class will condemn revolutionaries to persecution.

“We affirm that such persecution and imprisonment will not shake our faith in the correctness of our programme. On the contrary this trial has strengthened our conviction that the policy of the Fourth International offers the only road for the emancipation of the working class.

“At this critical juncture in the history of our party in Britain, the main task of our comrades is to close the ranks, to knit the party together and to march forward united, in that spirit of comradeship and with that singleness of purpose which alone can gain us the leadership of the British working class.

“The watchword of the members of the party must be: Unify the ranks! Build the party! For the victory of the Fourth International!”

# **Tories riding high**

## **Land Bill satisfies owners**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 3, Mid-July 1944]

In recent months the coalition leaders, alarmed at the spreading fears among the masses of the results of the war, have been painting a glowing picture of post-war developments.

“Work, food, homes” is the new version of Lloyd George’s “Land for heroes to live in”. But with the approach of “victory” the capitalist masters of Britain are revealing more openly the shape of things to come.

The Town and Country Planning Bill is one instance of the way the ruling class intends to face up to the problem of reconstruction. The fundamental principle on which this bill is based is the sacred right of private property and of capitalism to exploit the masses of the people. Even the mild and unsatisfactory measures of the Uthwatt Report[36] are swept aside as impracticable. No wonder it received the enthusiastic support of the National Federation of Property Owners, whose representative said that the suggestions were a “tremendous relief” to them. Obviously [it is a relief], since this bill is essentially designed to protect their and capitalism’s interests as a whole. The Marquis of Bute owns 117,000 acres of land. Merely for having possession of this land he receives



£109,000 in coal royalties! The Town and Country Planning Bill serves the interests of these landowners of private property – and with the support of Labour ministers! The bill expressly states:

“It is not proposed that a single master plan should be devised by the government and imposed on the country, nor that the existing pattern of land ownership or land use should be swept away.”

The fact that the bill puts planning in this framework makes a mockery of the ostensible reasons for which it is brought forward. The contradictions between the different capitalist interests make a national plan impossible. Thus the unsatisfactory development of building will continue more or less as it was. The people who will benefit most from the provisions of the bill will be the big landowners.

In this, of course, the government is acting as capitalist governments have acted in the past. It should never be forgotten that the land now owned by the landowners was stolen from the mass of the people through the enclosures in the sixteenth and eighteenth century with the assistance of the governments at the time. The interests of the peasants were ruthlessly disregarded and they were forcibly ejected from the land, to starve or work under slave conditions in the factories just being built in the towns.

That is how the Duchess of Sutherland obtained her land as late as the last century. Now the Duke of Buccleugh owns 459,108 acres, the Duke of Devonshire 186,000 acres, the Duke of Hamilton 157,387, the Marquis of Bute 117,000. It has been calculated that a little more than a few thousand people own the overwhelming part of the land in this country.

The provisions for “compensating” the big capitalists makes any attempt at

building houses, roads and parks, in the real interests of the workers virtually prohibitive because of the expense.

Lord Latham, Labour leader of the LCC [London County Council], [a man] not prone to any exaggeration, was compelled to say: “Comprehensive planning and reconstruction has been sold down the river... its [the bill’s – EG] main purpose seemed to be to interfere as little as possible with the rights of property.”

In the Uthwatt Report the recommendation was made to base suggested compensation for compulsory acquisition of land at March 1939 values as a maximum. This in itself was already unsatisfactory. But in the new bill the March 1939 prices become the guaranteed minimum.

Thus the bill benefits the speculators, landlords, and other parasites. The White Paper ingenuously states:

“...in by far the greater area of the country, owners will be able to go on using their land just as they do now, without interference of any sort, whether they be farmers, shopkeepers, industrialists, or the ordinary owners of a house and garden.”

The reference to “shopkeepers” and “ordinary owners” of houses and gardens is, of course, merely thrown in as a cover to conceal the protection of the real big property owners. The bill provides that no building shall be done without consent of the local planning authority – and then attempts carefully to prepare a balance of losses and gains between the different property owners of land if taken over by councils, the government, etc., or if compulsory restrictions on building rights are maintained. These are to be compensated or taxed accordingly, leaving, of course, a nice plum of 20 percent to the landowner who himself builds on the land as an “incentive” to increase the value of his land, or

suitable compensation if permission to build is refused. One can be sure that, as between one rapacious landowner and another, the government will be completely impartial, or, between a capitalist and a landowner, there will be strict justice. But against the workers there is no such impartiality. However, only in blitzed areas, or areas which have become blighted, is the right given to local or other authorities to compulsorily purchase land. In a leader, the Manchester Guardian states:

“It [the bill – EG] would leave the initiative in deciding how land should be used with the private owners and (to a lesser degree) with the local authorities acting in furtherance of private and local interests.”

Even the Tory boroughs and county councils were taken aback by the cynical way in which new burdens are being thrust on the workers, and the local rates, for the benefit of the landowners. There was protest on the part of every council in England at this barefaced robbery. Naturally, the plan for which the Labour ministers accept responsibility, has called forth a storm of protest within the labour movement. Labour MPs, trade union branches, the London Labour Party, the executives of the London Trades Council, have protested against it.

This question of the land is a decisive one in viewing the post-war world the capitalists are planning. They are not prepared to attack the privileges of even the most reactionary and outworn section of the ruling class, the landowners. This scheme, because of the storm of protest, may be altered in some of its details. But fundamentally it will remain as it is – an attack upon the workers, an insurmountable obstacle in the way of building a better Britain, and a bolstering up of privilege.

This bill is a continuation of the process of fleecing the masses for the benefit of the landowners, while pretending to introduce measures to ensure their betterment. It will not have any better result than its predecessors. In the above quoted leader of the Manchester Guardian the admission is openly made:

“Outright nationalisation of the land, as the Uthwatt Report points out, would solve the problem at a stroke by simply removing the needs for paying compensation or securing betterment; but nationalisation would also serve other purposes which do not command such general approval.”

The coalition has run true to form. The Labour leaders are being used to put shameful legislation across the workers in the guise of “progress”. The solution to the problem is simple enough, but the capitalists would do anything to avoid it. What do they care if the generations who have suffered in the war suffer in the “reconstruction” after the war for good measure? So long as their profits are maintained they do not worry if millions live in unsanitary, disease-ridden, filthy, airless houses. The land, the labour, and the techniques are there to make Britain healthy, well-fed, happy and comfortable. All it needs is a well thought out and planned organisation of industry and the towns on a national scale. But it is impossible to do it while private ownership of the land stands in the way. It is private ownership of land which is the stumbling block – therefore the private ownership of the land must be ended!

It is time to get back what the landowners stole from the people. The land must be nationalised without compensation to the landlords! The Labour MPs are aghast at this outrageous bill, so let them break the coalition and fight for a policy in the interests of the workers. Nationalise the land without compensation to the big landowners! The coalition is responsible for this scheme? End the coalition!

# **TUC helps Goebbels**

## **Labour and Stalinist leaders betray German working class**

[\[37\]](#)

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 7, November 1944]

The Trade Union Congress has lined up with the Vansittartists in the most cowardly way imaginable. The kept capitalist press, from the Daily Mail to the renegade Daily Worker, has hailed with glee the attitude adopted by the TUC against the German people.

One headline, taken at random, reads: All Germans guilty says TUC (Daily Sketch). On a card vote of 5,056,000 to 1,350,000, the position of the TUC bureaucrats was carried. Anyone who has the slightest contact with the miners, railwaymen and other workers knows that this resolution is a travesty of the feelings of the organised working class, and even of the more backward sections who are unorganised. But the TUC claims to speak in their name, although the workers in the unions were not consulted on this matter.

**Citrine in the van of the pack**

In the van of the pack, in full cry against German workers, was Sir Walter Citrine, general secretary of the TUC. He said:

“There is no dispute about the punishment of war criminals. The point of controversy arises over the responsibility of the German people as a whole...

“It was utterly impossible,” Sir Walter argued, “on the one hand to affirm the principle of restoration unless side by side with affirmation they realised that restoration must be done in the main by the German people.

“Assuming they accepted that reasoning, how in the name of heaven could they affirm that the German people were innocent? They would be punishing the innocent by compelling them – the people who they thought ought to be absolved from the blame – to make good the devastation and make some form of reparation.

“If the principle is laid down that it is just and equitable that Germany should make good the devastation,” Sir Walter declared, “it follows that the restoration must be done by the German people. What other doctrines can you evolve? I affirm that you will not know for years after the war precisely what measure of responsibility will devolve on any particular section of Germany.

“When the Allies march into Berlin we shall find so many anti-Nazis that it will be very difficult to know who was carrying on the war in Germany. That is a contingency we shall have to prepare for... there is far too much mushy sentimentality about this question.

“Nobody has wanted to see signs of revolt in Germany more than I have. The

TUC has appealed to the German labour movement. While I would be the last to deny the bravery of individual German trade unionists, I cannot escape the conclusion that there has been no large scale organised resistance in Germany since the advent of Hitlerism. It is not pleasant for me to have to say that.”

The hypocrisy and humbug of this is positively repulsive. But it is likely that without the assistance of the Russian trade union bureaucrats, who were “fraternal” delegates from the Kremlin, the TUC bureaucrats would not have got away with it so easily. They used the prestige of the heroic Red Army and of the Russian revolution for the filthy purpose of the imperialists.

### **Kuznetsov sets the tone**

The speech of Kuznetsov set the tone of the whole proceedings. It was the most vicious and chauvinistic of all. Betraying all the teachings of Lenin, he gave the most racist speech of the whole conference. Deliberately and consciously, he identified the German workers and the German masses with their Nazi overlords; the crimes of Hitler’s SS – he pretends – were the crimes of the ordinary German workers and soldiers. It was in this manner that he attempted to confuse the issue. From these racists there were no traces of the elementary ideas of internationalism, socialism, or even common human solidarity: “The German fascist invaders must answer for all these fiendish atrocities,” Mr. Kuznetsov declared. “The Soviet Union stressed the fact that in the reconstruction of the districts destroyed, Russia would need very considerable help. It would be a good thing,” he said, “if all those infected with a feeling of leniency towards the fascists [let us remember he does not distinguish between the German people and the fascists – EG] were sent for a short time to the territory where the German invaders ruled. If these people are honest, their soft hearts would, without doubt, become as hard as stone.”

All this deluge of anti-German propaganda is merely following in the wake of a

campaign of race hatred and calumny that Goebbels would find it hard to beat. As he once waged a campaign against all Jews, so now the capitalist press here wages a campaign against all Germans. And this is not done unconsciously. Like Goebbels racial myth, this Vansittartism has a purpose. It is a preparation for the bleeding of Germany. As the Daily Worker cheerfully headlines: Germany must pay – say Soviet and British trade unions.

## **Betrayal of socialism**

One cannot read the pages of the labour press, in particular the Daily Worker, without a feeling of shame that these traitors speak in the name of the working class and of socialism. They have violated every elementary idea developed by the great teachers of socialism. You can search the pages of Marx, Engels, and Lenin; even if one reads the old labour pioneers in this country, such as Kier Hardy, nowhere can you find anything that could be used to give even a shadow of justification to this criminal policy. How often have the teachers of socialism proclaimed that the working class of all countries have nothing to gain by war except misery and grief, hardship and death? The German workers have had their full share of misfortune in the present war. The ones who gain out of the war, as in every country, are the big monopolies and trusts, the Nazi hierarchy. German workers have gained no more out of this war than the British workers.

Instead of attacking the people really responsible, the criminals of finance capital, in Britain as well as in Germany, in Wall Street as well as in Rome, they attempt to cover up the real cause of war. And there is a sinister reason behind the support of the TUC leaders and of the Stalinists for a “hard peace” for Germany. The ruling classes, as always, are not prepared to destroy private ownership of the means of production, neither in Britain nor anywhere else. They wish to protect private property in Germany – and thus the criminals responsible (together with themselves), for this war – and unload all the burdens of the war onto the shoulders of the German workers. Apart from the top leaders of the Nazi movement, not many of the real culprits in Germany will get their deserts at the hands of the Allies. But it is to prevent them getting their deserts at



the hands of the workers, soldiers and peasants of Germany that the capitalists are devoting their efforts. In this they are receiving the full support of Stalin and the labour leaders.

When Citrine, the new apostle of the barricades, demands of the German workers (from the safety of London) that they take action at the barricades; when the Stalinists, the new found lovers of constitutionalism and legality in all the countries of Europe, sneer at the Germans for accepting the rule of Hitler, that is a sight to make the gods laugh. The German workers will yet be on the barricades, as their French brothers have already been, not because of the appeals of these Pharisees and hypocrites – but in spite of them.

### **Goebbels grateful to TUC bosses**

If the German nation has tolerated Hitler's rule during the last five years, the responsibility for this rests directly on the shoulders of the Citrines, the Lawthers, the Stalins and the Pollitts. It was the German people's fear of a new and worse Versailles Treaty of enslavement that led them to see no way out. Today, what holds the Germans workers back, when Hitler has lost what little support he did possess, is the "hard peace" which Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin promises them and which the TUC bureaucrats confirmed at the TUC conference. Goebbels has seized with delight the assistance rendered him by Messrs Citrine, Kuznetsov and Co. The TUC resolution was broadcast throughout Germany to convince the German people that the fate of the Nazis and the fate of the masses are bound together. "Enjoy the war, the peace will be terrible!" is his latest slogan.

### **Revolts in Germany**

While the new fiery warrior, 'Horatio Nelson' Citrine, has put the telescope to his blind eye and proclaimed that he sees nothing, revolts and mutinies, strikes and uprisings, have been reported in various parts of Germany.

If we had to publish a list of even half of these events, the pages of the Socialist Appeal would be filled – and this from the carefully edited reports of the capitalist press.

To take a couple, the Vansittart Daily Mail, which can hardly be accused of sympathy for the Germans, reported in its issue of October 12 1944:

“Industrial disturbances in the Ruhr and Rhineland were the main cause of the long telephone silence between Berlin and Stockholm according to travellers arriving here by plane from Germany. Affected centres mentioned are Dusseldorf, Cologne and Saarbrucken, but the trouble is believed to have spread further afield.”

On October 15th, W.E. Mundy of the Telegraph reported under the headline Peace riots stamped out in Ruhr – SS armed with tanks and gas:

“The anti-Nazi demonstration in the Ruhr and Western Germany which I reported recently, and which flared up again last week prior to the five days Berlin-Sweden telephone silence, have caused Himmler to issue a savage warning.

“He has threatened to send tanks, machine-guns and tear gas to be used by fanatical SS youth against German underground factory workers, foreign workers and Wehrmacht officers inside the Reich who are trying to undermine

the regime. ‘...Any new mutiny in the streets will be ruthlessly suppressed’.”

The same newspaper, on the same day, also reports:

“An unconfirmed report, broadcast by FFI Radio Lyons said: ‘Riots have taken place in Berlin. SS troops were called and fired into a crowd demonstrating for peace. One small group of rebels routed an SS formation’.”

### **Why should German workers trust British labour leaders?**

Citrine says: “We appeal to the German workers”. But what does he offer them? Churchill instead of Hitler? Churchill has always been the enemy of the workers everywhere. But, what is even more important, why should the German workers trust Citrine? He acknowledges the crimes of the German imperialists (so does even the Daily Mail), and the capitalists from the City of London, who financed and helped Hitler to power because it was profitable for them to do so. It is in serving these very same capitalists that Citrine does his dirty work. How easy it is for Citrine and Co. to point the finger of scorn at the German workers, yet he remains silent about the vile crimes of the British capitalists – [every bit] as black as those of the Nazis!

In India 5 million died of starvation on the direct responsibility of Churchill and his class, and now yet another famine is imminent. There was not a word about this at the TUC conference! [Unlike the German workers,] Citrine does not face the firing squads and torture chambers of the Gestapo, but yet not a word. Brave Citrine!

So what can the Indian workers think? And the German workers? Is it to this

hypocrite they must hearken? The very idea is laughable. “Look not to the mote in the other man’s eye before you look at the beam in your own.” When your own hands are clean, Messrs labour leaders, you can accuse others. The Indian workers might just as well say that the British workers are responsible for the 5 million Indian dead, and for the thousands upon thousands murdered and imprisoned by British imperialists. But we know that the British workers are not responsible for these crimes committed in their name; no more are the German workers responsible for the crimes of Hitler. But Citrine and Stalin bear their share of responsibility for both. The gallant Kuznetzov and his companion had not a word to say about the atrocities committed under the British flag. They looked with equanimity upon the crimes that took place in India.

These people hope that the working class has a short memory. It is not so long ago that Molotov stated that fascism was a matter of “taste”, and that the Allies should cease fighting against the peace-lover Hitler. It was not so long ago that Pollitt and Co. were proclaiming:

“Hitler repeated once again that the war was thrust upon him by Britain. Against this historical fact there is no reply. Britain declared war, not Germany. Attempts were made to end the war, but the Soviet-German peace overtures were rejected by Britain. All through these months the British and French governments have had the power to end the war, they have chosen to extend it... war should never have been declared on September 3rd, there should have been negotiations and peace talks.” (Daily Worker, Editorial, February 1 1940).

Citrine is a good barricade fighter. The Daily Herald editorial on the TUC remarked that the German people must be sternly dealt with, [because] “they quailed at the barricades.” But Citrine, too, must hope that the masses have short memories. Do you remember, Citrine, the TUC conference of 1933? Did you think you were speaking in the name of the British workers when, at Brighton in 1933, you said:

“All I can say is that a general strike was definitely planned and projected, but the German leaders had to give consideration to the fact that a general strike after the atmosphere created by the Reichstag fire, and with six and a half million unemployed, was an act fraught with the gravest consequences which might be described as nothing less than civil war.”

Thus Citrine justified the cowardice and treachery of his brother Social Democrat leaders in Germany for refusing to lead the German workers who were willing and eager to struggle against the Nazis. And this even after Hitler was in power. Faced with the same position in Britain we cannot doubt that he and his colleagues would behave in the same treacherous and cowardly fashion. Yet he and others of his ilk slander the German workers.

This is the real Citrine. Together with the Stalinists, you, Citrine, are responsible for the victory of Hitler; you betrayed the German workers then, as you are betraying the British and German workers now.

### **They fear international solidarity**

Citrine and Stalin do not want to punish the German workers because those workers do not revolt, but because they are going to revolt. They fear that the German workers will gain the support of the British workers. Despite the Gestapo and the SS, the ordinary Germans fraternised with the peoples of Europe. Special orders had to be issued to the German soldiers threatening them if they fraternised with the population in Russia and other countries. In Russia the German soldiers gave their rations to starving women and children. They know that the British soldiers will behave in the same way in Germany. That is why new military orders have been issued threatening the Germans with punishment if they dare to get on friendly terms with Allied soldiers. But this campaign will be in vain.

A journalist writes in the Express fatalistically:

“How are you going to stop the British soldier from being friendly to the German civilians once he gets into Germany? I suppose it can be done, but it is difficult to see how. If nature takes its course, he will hand out his chocolate to the babies, and his rations and cigarettes to the hungry parents.

“I am only going by what has happened in Italy, and around a thousand prisoners’ cages all the way from here to Africa.”

The terrible thing is that the class conscious workers whose normal reactions would be those of international class solidarity are precisely the ones whose leaders – or rather “misleaders” – are leading them down reactionary paths. Instead of agitating among their more backward fellow workers on international lines of class solidarity, those workers influenced by Citrine, and especially by the “Communist” Party, propagate Vansittart doctrines. Therein lies the danger to socialism in Europe. Under these conditions the first duty and the first task of all genuine class conscious workers is to ceaselessly counter these vile activities.

*British workers! Don't be fooled! They are playing with your lives and your future. If you allow yourselves to help in the crushing of German workers, you are preparing the same medicine for yourselves.*

*Socialist workers! Do not listen to Citrine!*

*Communist workers! Do not be fooled by Pollitt!*

**Rebuild a socialist Europe**

Remember the teachings of the great socialist leaders. In the last war the German Junkers and generals – like the British capitalists and generals – plundered, burned, and murdered in Russia, just as the Nazis have done in this war. Yet Lenin always distinguished between two Germanys – the Germany of the workers and the Germany of the capitalists, and two Britains – the Britain of the workers and the Britain of the capitalists.

But the question will be asked: how is the ruin and damage to be paid for, and the reconstruction of Europe to be achieved? To socialist workers the answer is simple: Lenin's way – expropriate all the criminals responsible for the war, who sit not only in Berlin, but in London, Paris, and New York.

A socialist Europe, with the voluntary and enthusiastic cooperation of the German people, with the skill of German labour and German technique, would mean a new life for Europe, a new standard of living for the whole of Europe, and a new and higher culture for all of humanity. The German workers would gladly give their all in sacrificing and building for the benefit of all Europe. But a capitalist Germany, and capitalist reparations, hunger for the German people – that is what a stern peace will mean – will bring hunger to the British, French, and other workers too. A perpetuation of hatred will mean new wars. The defeat of Germany does not end war; on the contrary, it prepares [the way] for new wars between the victors. If you do not destroy the cause of war and fascism – its parent, capitalism – these calamities will be inflicted with tenfold severity on the peoples of the world.

*Down with Vansittartism!*

*Protest in your branch against the Vansittart resolution of the TUC!*

*For the hand of friendship and fraternity to the German workers!*

*For a socialist Germany in a socialist Europe!*

# **Communist Party conference prepares post-war sell-out**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 8, November 1944]

The national conference of the “Communist” Party of Great Britain met on October 18th to 30th. It confirmed clearly that the Stalinists in Britain are preparing to continue the policy of class collaboration and sell-out to the bosses after the war, as they are already doing in Europe and all over the world.

On Vansittartism, the war, post-war policy at home and abroad – the same cynical, criminal course is to be maintained. Many sincere militants and large numbers of the Communist Party rank and file have persuaded, or tried to persuade themselves, that the policy of the Stalinists has been nothing but a “manoeuvre” to deceive the capitalists. But these workers must now begin to see where the Stalinist leadership is taking them.

The conference of course came out with a demagogic programme for higher wages, even nationalisation of basic industries, and better housing. But on how to get that programme put into effect, the Stalinist leadership deliberately and with conscious dishonesty led astray their members and supporters within the working class.



*These reforms, they pretended, could be put into force by collaboration with the capitalist class. Already during the war we have seen what such “collaboration” has meant between the Labour and Stalinist leaders and the capitalists in the government. Promises of “equality of sacrifice” etc., have meant sacrifices for the masses and profits for the capitalists, while the Stalinists have systematically sabotaged the workers’ struggles and acted as strike-breakers and blacklegs doing the dirty work for the capitalists. And the result?*

Palme Dutt, “theoretician” of the CP was compelled to admit, “their own [reactionary and propertied interests – EG] profits had increased by leaps and bounds during the war.” And it could not be otherwise. In war and in peace, the ruling class utilises its control of industry and the government for the purpose of exploiting and gaining profits at the expense of the misery and poverty of the working class. And as long as the capitalist class and its representatives have any control, that is the policy they intend to operate.

The Stalinists have quoted extracts with pride from A. J. Cummings’ article on the conference in the News Chronicle of October 30th. It is a sympathetic appraisal from a capitalist liberal. Let us see how he regards the conference.

“The Chairman’s table was draped with the British and Russian national flags. The Tories might have held a meeting in the same place without removing a single decoration.

“In effect it [Pollitt’s speech – EG] was a plea for the best possible cooperation of all classes and peoples to win the war against fascism and to produce peace and order in the post-war world. It called frankly for ‘economic co-operation between the capitalist and socialist world’.”

“Labour had the responsibility of reaching agreement with communists, liberals

and other parties and groups of the left...”

“If he had had time to drop in, Mr Churchill would have found himself in a patriotic environment; and he would doubtless have received an enthusiastic welcome.”

No doubt Churchill would! As an arch-enemy of the working class and of socialism, he could have expected a warm reception from the renegades on the platform.

Nevertheless in contrast to the American Communist Party, which has come out openly in favour of monopoly capitalism now and for the indefinite future, the British Stalinist leaders had to disguise the shameless sell-out to big business as much as they could. Not because their policy is any different, but because of the higher socialist consciousness of the British working class, who are completely disillusioned with capitalism and seeking a solution to their problems in a change of the system.

The result was that Pollitt, Dutt & Co. contradicted themselves over and over in their speeches. The Daily Worker of October 30th reports Pollitt, for example:

“The market at home and abroad is boundless, he said, there need be no export problem for Britain if the policy of international economic co-operation is pursued alongside a domestic policy at home that is based on such a programme as that outlined in Britain for the people.”

“The most far sighted capitalists understand...”

In the very next paragraph the lie is given to this picture:

“At the same time it is plain that the capitalists are bound by a thousand ties, not only by their habits of thought but by their immediate private interests to the old system of colonial rule and monopoly exploitation.”

This is the law of class rule. The capitalists will fight tooth and nail to defend their right to exploit the masses in Britain and the colonies. Those who wish to cooperate with them must do so on their terms. Already at the end of the last century Lenin pointed out, in regard to Millerandism (the class collaboration and entry of socialists into the government in a capitalist ministry) that such collaboration would bring wonderful “plans on paper” which would never be carried out. Plans which were intended to deceive and fool the workers. These are the plans of Pollitt & Co. They know very well, as Lenin tirelessly emphasised, that it is not a question of “good” or “bad” capitalists, but the workings of the capitalist system itself. And Pollitt & Co. are quite well aware of the desperate position of the British capitalists. In this war, their yankee “allies” have stripped them bare of most of their investments in South America and various other countries.

After the war, far from there being an idyllic period of cooperation between the capitalist states, there will be an intensified struggle for the markets of the world particularly by Britain and America. Roosevelt has proclaimed America’s intention to treble her exports after the war. America can produce goods cheaper than Britain. The markets of the world are limited, while productive capacity has increased during the war; the only way out for British capitalism would be in a savage onslaught on the standard of living of the workers. Not pleasant cooperation, but bitter class struggles nationally and internationally is the stern prospect before the working class.

When Pollitt, Dutt & Co. say that the nationalisation of basic industry would solve the problem, that is true, if it is added that the country is not crippled by a huge debt in compensating the big capitalist parasites. Pollitt & Co. are discreetly silent on this. But of course these demands are introduced to fool their followers. The Stalinists try and disguise their policy by confusing references to the need for a “Labour and progressive” government (while of course continuing to support the reactionary Churchill government).

But the whole deception was completely exposed at the conference. Something went wrong with the carefully regulated “unanimity” with which CP conferences are run. One delegate from Wales, reflecting the uneasiness with which the best members of the CP regard this policy, demanded that there should be no cooperation with so-called “progressive” Tories after the war. He moved an amendment, according to the Daily Worker, asking congress to declare that, “any formal alliance with progressive Tories would endanger working class unity” and that “where a communist candidate would endanger the election of either progressive or Labour candidate and let in a Tory, our party candidate should be withdrawn and every support given to the Labour or progressive candidate.”

The CP executive rejected this and came out decisively and openly for support for the Tories. John Gollan, in reply to the debate,

“asked the Congress to emphatically reject the Abertillery amendment, the acceptance of which would be running away from the issues involved [!! – EG]. The amendment was perilously close to the line of the Labour Party in wanting to fight alone. It was impossible to reject allies in the struggle ahead.”

Thus, with smooth phrases the Stalinist traitors try to conceal the real struggle ahead. All his life Lenin fought for the independence of the working class and its party from the capitalists. In Britain, the workers learned from many painful experiences the necessity for their organisations standing independent of the capitalist parties. Now the Stalinists try and undermine this.

Pollitt, in dealing with the war in the East, was compelled to admit that “the war against Japan is not looked upon with the same enthusiasm as the war against Hitler”, because big sections of the working class can clearly see in the war against Japan a naked struggle for the colonial loot grabbed by British imperialism in the past; as a fight for the right to enslave and dominate the colonial peoples of the East. The capitalists find it difficult to dress up the struggle in the Far East as a fight in defence of the interests of the masses. Nevertheless Pollitt & Co., obedient to the dictates of Kremlin foreign policy, come out in full support of British imperialism in Asia as well as Europe.

To try and coat the imperialist pill of naked aggression and plunder, they hypocritically appeal to the

“British government [which] must undertake certain measures, which would lessen the sacrifice of British and American lives:”

“They must apply the principles of the Atlantic Charter to all colonial possessions; and give a solemn pledge to all the nations of the Far East that, in addition to freeing them from the yoke of Japanese militarism, we would assist in the immediate raising of their standards of life.”

“We demand the immediate release of the Indian national leaders and the opening of new negotiations.” (Pollitt’s speech reported in the Daily Worker, October 30th)

Pollitt & Co. know very well, that what determines the policy of a country is which class holds the power. The capitalists, who are responsible for the exploitation of the colonial peoples, control the government today. It is their

policy and their war which is being fought for. To ask them to put the demagogic provisions of the Atlantic Charter into effect, would be like asking Hitler to introduce democracy into Germany. The 5,000,000 Indians dead in the famine, and the new famine which is imminent – a direct result of the policy of British imperialism – are an answer to this phrase-mongering. Pollitt and the other CP leaders know that such a policy is impossible while capitalism continues in control.

Moreover, if the Atlantic Charter is to be applied in the East, why not in the West? Far from advocating a democratic peace, the Stalinists are demanding a peace which would make the Versailles Treaty's harsh terms seem reasonable, thus inevitably sowing the dragon's teeth of future wars. The capitalist press hailed with delight the shameful attitude which is official CP policy, that the responsibility for the war rests on the shoulders of the German people. In this way the Stalinists assist them in pulling the wool over the eyes of the workers. We know, as Dutt and the other ex-communists know, that all the imperialist powers bear as much responsibility as the German imperialists.

Our Party, representing the teachings of Marx and Lenin, puts forward the demand for the Labour Party to reassert its independence from the capitalists. We fight for the Labour Party to fight for a majority at the elections. But even on this basis we do not deceive the workers into believing that this will solve their problems. We put it forward in order to mobilise and educate the workers in the struggle against the capitalists. This can only be a stage in the organisation of the workers for the overthrow of capitalism. But so long as capitalism remains, it will inevitably lead to war, mass unemployment, hunger and fascism.

Communist workers! Isn't it clear that your leaders and their policy are not communist at all? That they have nothing in common with the ideas of revolutionary socialism as put forward by Marx and Lenin. Today only the Trotskyists, the real revolutionary communists, tell the truth to the workers and fight for workers' power and socialism! For a socialist Britain in a socialist Europe!

# Redundancy

## A criticism of the November editorial in the industrial bulletin

by Anne Walker

[RCP Internal Bulletin, December 14 1944]

There are some particular aspects of the redundancy question which I should like to see further discussed.

It appears that the main danger of redundancy at the moment is not unemployment, though there may be localised unemployment when factories close down in districts where there is no alternative work (the South Wales ROFs have been mentioned as an example of this). In such places there might be stay-in strikes against the closing down, and our task would be to draw the political lessons, and make it as much of a general issue as possible as opposed to a local issue and, of course, to make sure the stay-in strike is properly organised so that the bosses have no chance to turn the workers out on the streets, where they would become an amorphous mass difficult to organise. Our main tactic in this whole period must be to keep the workers in the factories. For this reason I think that the demand for "Work or full maintenance" should be handled very cautiously; raised incorrectly, for instance, as the main slogan, it would be an acceptance of the principle of unemployment. It might even be taken up by the government and used to get the organised workers out of the factories, their promises could easily be broken later.

But the vital issue now, appears to be the use the bosses are making of the situation to lower wages, break union organisation, and divide the workers into antagonistic sections, men and women, craftsmen and dilutees, trade-unionists and non-trade-unionists. Our task is to give a lead to the unifying forces in the working class, by pushing the issues which bind the class together, and opposing those which tend to split it, thus we can use the attacks of the bosses to forge a weapon against them. The editorial of the November industrial bulletin came out against the sacking of dilutees, but supported the demand that non-trade unionists should go first. I think that this demand, can only have the effect of splitting the workers and we should oppose it. It is not just a matter of getting rid of scabs, the shop stewards can look after that if we demand shop stewards' control of transfers. There are vast numbers of unorganised workers who are [missing words] fact. The building trade can never replace engineering, as it is a dependent industry; in fact by the development of prefabrication engineering may tend to absorb sections of the building trade. Today's redundancy is the beginning of tomorrow's mass unemployment; an unemployment that can never be rectified by any so-called boom in the building trade.

Redundancy is therefore not simply an industrial question that can be solved through trade union methods of struggle. It is a striking example of the impasse of the capitalist system, which in the last instance can only be solved through its overthrow and the establishment of socialism; that is why a real struggle against redundancy is essentially a political struggle.

### **The party's role**

What therefore is the party's role on these questions in the present period? Redundancy and unemployment are political issues and our attitude towards them is governed by the necessity to raise the political consciousness of the working class. We continually strive to teach them the necessity for class unity on political questions.



*Herein lies the error of “nons go first” in the struggle against against redundancy. It tends to maintain the division of the workers along trade union lines in a fight on a political issue, when the aim of the party should be to unify them on the widest possible basis.*

We are aware of course that whilst fighting for such a perspective it is necessary to take the situation as it really is and not as we would like it to be. The prospect of a nation-wide struggle against redundancy on the basis of our transitional programme seems remote at the moment. It is possible of course that sharp struggles may take place in isolated factories, but the main opportunity for the party is that it gives us the chance of relating the transitional programme to some immediate issues.

The party's role in industry at present is essentially that of an educator, and our slogans at the present time on the sliding scale of hours, wages, and full employment are designed towards this end. Our main task is to prepare and educate the workers for what lies ahead. This means an all-sided political exposition of the issues involved. We must explain and explain again the real basis of redundancy, whilst endeavouring to give leadership and striving for the widest possible political and organisational support for the party's policy, but recognising the limitations as well. If we are faced with sackings on the grounds of redundancy, whether it be of a trade unionist or a “non”, we do not take sides on who is to be sacked, because of the very nature of our perspective. If we do take sides as the editorial suggests, and advocate that “nons” go first, we destroy, by an opportunist concession, the whole basis of our political attitude towards redundancy.

The party's main job is to teach the workers a political lesson. If a struggle does develop, our members endeavour to give it leadership as well, but they can only struggle so far as the workers are prepared to struggle; beyond that they do their best to prepare them for the next stages ahead.

## The “closed shop” and redundancy

The editorial remarks that “insofar as we are faced with actual sackings taking place, we demand that this be on the basis of the closed shop”. In other words the slogan of “nons first” is posed in conjunction with the slogan of the closed shop. The idea implicit in this is that a closed shop can be enforced by threatening the “nons” that unless they join the union they must be the first to leave the factory.

We do not rule out the possibility that a few “nons” may be frightened into joining the union in this way, and that such an event could mean that a 100 percent union shop would result. But this would not alter the fact that someone would still have to go, if the transitional demands were not operated. Even in a 100 percent shop, realities have to be faced; contracts are cancelled and the management insist that someone must go. Here we come to the core of the editorial, which states that on the docks, where you have a “closed shop”, dismissals and transfers would take place “on the basis of established membership”. So the idea is that you put the fear of hell into the “nons” one day and force them to join the union, and the next day (carrying out the editorial policy) put them out of the factory “on the basis of established membership”. The latest additions to the ranks of the trade union are the first to be put on the streets, with the full authority of the shop stewards’ committee. Here is revealed the farcical position of attempting to fight a political issue with trade union methods of struggle.

We feel that our comrades have raised the question of the closed shop in an attempt to find some sort of militant formula to lean on. Supposing we have a closed shop and sackings because of redundancy have got to take place, the comrades, according to their position in relation to the dockers, would demand the “established membership” line be operated. But the newer members of the union might not want to leave on that basis! Here we would have a real split in

the ranks and if we were firm on the editorial policy we might find ourselves participating in a strike on behalf of one group of trade unionists trying to force another group out of the factory.

There also seems to be some confusion about the term “closed shop”. It must be understood that a “closed shop” is one where an agreement has been reached that, to quote the AEU rule book, “the shop is worked exclusively by union members”; this is a different position from a shop where 100 percent organisation only exists, and to go from one to the other requires a struggle with the employers, who have consistently fought against the closed shop. Well organised and powerful strike action would be required to force the demand home.

Our comrades don't tell us anything new when they advocate either the “closed shop” or 100 percent trade unionism. But to organise for this a correct attitude towards the “nons” is absolutely necessary. The success of the fight for a closed shop, for example, demands a thorough education and preparation of the workers concerned, plus of course favourable circumstances. To inject artificially the slogan of the “closed shop” into a situation when workers are being sacked through redundancy may well prove a first-rate piece of adventurism.

### **Other examples**

The authors of the editorial demonstrate a complete failure to work out the implications of their slogans. What happens for instance in a factory where there are 5 percent non-unionists? Our policy not having gained support, the demand goes forward that these 5 percent be sacked first. If the management agrees and they go first – what then? 5 percent will not finish redundancy, and the tactical position will be so much the weaker, for having already accepted the fact that there is a basis for dismissals; and this is the most advantageous case!

But suppose the management refuse to accede to the demand? Do we advocate strike action to enforce it? If so, we are giving the “nons” no alternative but to throw in their lot with the employer and scab. For, if the strike succeeds they are on the dole; if they join the union and thus make the shop 100 percent they still go on the dole as the newest members of the union. And this is the way, we are told, a revolutionary party is to approach a political problem, striving for the maximum coordination between organised and unorganised workers!

It has been suggested that this is the way to prevent militants being victimised. But in the event of victimisation we should try to mobilise the whole factory, skilled and unskilled, members and “nons”, for strike action for the reinstatement of the militant. This applies irrespective of any question of redundancy. The whole factory behind the factory committee is our aim – but the “nons first” slogan cuts right across such a line. Even if the “nons” are sacked, there is still redundancy and trade unionists have to leave as well – sacking “nons” is no guarantee or safeguard against the victimisation of a militant steward or convenor.

As a last example, take a factory where the trade unionists are in minority (and there are quite a number). Would our comrades in the event of sackings advocate “nons first”? Obviously it would be a fantastic and adventuristic position. The only chance of struggle here is through a correct attitude towards the “nons” on the basis of our programme, appeals for unity on the job, etc. This would be our chance to organise the factory on the issue of redundancy, not on the “nons first” basis. The more we relate this policy to actual practice the more ridiculous it becomes.

## **The origin of the errors**

The trade union bureaucrats, searching for a formula which will give scope for a certain amount of “blowing off steam” but at the same time by-pass any real struggle against capitalism, put forward the slogan of “dilutees first”. We reject this solution, counterposing to it the need to struggle for the “right to work” by the whole of the working class: no dismissals, shorter hours, etc., as per the transitional programme.

The basis for this stand of the EC of the AEU is among the craft unionists. To these we must patiently explain why and where it is a wrong stand. The main points we raise in this connection are:

Redundancy and unemployment cannot be solved in this way.

It will lead to a split in the workers ranks and the formation of an army of potential scab labour, and because of this it cannot even protect their rates (which was the basis of their acceptance of the dilution agreement), but in fact threatens them.

The real dilution that threatens their rates and conditions is not in the influx of fresh workers into the industry (up to the end of 1943 under 5 percent of the AEU membership were actually registered under the Dilution Agreement, and the Dilution Agreement in theory applies only to these) but the whole tendency to de-skill the engineering industry – the classic example of this being Rolls Royce.

Superficially, it seems that a useful counter-slogan is that “nons go first”. In this many militants see an opportunity to put forward something real and concrete as a counterpoise to the official line. We can understand their attitude but it shows the need for political education, which is essentially the job of the party. We have to show them that this is no ordinary industrial issue that can be solved by negotiation or strike. It is part and parcel of the crisis of capitalism, which capitalism cannot solve. We then attempt to point to them the real road out via the transitional programme.

In essence, this slogan of “nons first” is no different from the other of “dilutees first”:

It cannot solve the problem.

It divides the workers, accentuates an already existent division instead of uniting in common struggle.

It allows the reformist bureaucrats to hold any movement on a very low industrial plane instead of leading the fight against capitalism.

“Trade unions”, says the Transitional programme, “even the most powerful, embrace no more than 20 to 25 percent of the working class, and at that, predominantly the more skilled and better paid layers”. It is not the “nons” fault that considerable numbers remain unorganised. The structure and composition of the unions are in many respects barriers towards this. Such barriers cannot be broken down except by the party, whose job it is to lead the unorganised as well as the organised. We must not and dare not discriminate when redundancy arises.

When our party members operate in industry they are something more than good militant trade unionists. They operate above all consciously as revolutionary Marxists. Hence the need to break sharply from syndicalism, craftism, and attendant sicknesses. These particular steps are not always easy ones. Pressure is sometimes very great in the unions and factories. To be able to swim against the stream and patiently explain does not always bring immediate results and from time to time “short cut” policies are proposed. The slogan of “nons first” on the basis of the closed shop does not seem too bad on the surface but it conceals a dangerous pitfall for the party. If we are to educate the valuable militant contacts who are moving towards the party it is essential that we withdraw immediately these positions and commence a collective theoretical rearmament of our trade union militants.

# Statement of the Political Bureau on redundancy

## Political Bureau, RCP

[RCP Internal Bulletin, December 29 1944]

The editorial in the last issue of the Industrial Bulletin has aroused a discussion in the party along unexpected lines. From our older comrades in industry, and particularly those with a craft background of the skilled worker, we thought that a difference might arise on questions of factory tactics, but not on policy. Differences of a craft character which might arise could readily be eliminated and clarified after a short discussion. But the opposition has arisen from a different source: from comrades who are in the main young, and whose experience in industry is confined mainly to war time relations and forms of work.

Notwithstanding the belief of our comrades that their differences are on policy, they are in fact, differences on factory tactics. Questions which are considered in the editorial as factory tactics – an appendage of cur[rent] transitional political programme – are raised falsely as the proposed solution of the PB to the problem of redundancy. It is said that the question of “nons first” is a political question and that the future of the party will depend on our attitude towards the tactic of “nons first.”

While the comrades have sought the editorial with a microscope, they did not see quite important political omissions – omissions of programme: the question of a scheme of public works, workers’ control, etc. The editorial, of course, did not claim to be a complete exposition and concretisation of the party’s transitional

programme as it relates to redundancy. It specifically pointed out that there would be future elucidation in future editorials. As the discussion proceeds this political elucidation will be carried out simultaneously with the discussion on industrial tactics.

Unemployment can only be solved politically. Commencing from a correct base – unemployment is a political question – the comrades try to negate the transformation of political strategy into its component parts, including industrial tactics. “Nons first”, the partial question is equated with our transitional programme, the general solution. Phrases replace concrete tactical directives – sectarianism converts the programme into a lie. Word from comrade Trotsky to those comrades who wish to think:

“An idea, correct from the point of view of revolutionary strategy as a whole, is converted into a lie, and at that into a reactionary lie, if it is not translated into the language of tactics. Is it correct that in order to destroy unemployment and misery it is first necessary to destroy capitalism? It is correct. But only the biggest blockhead can conclude from all this, that we do not have to fight this very day, with all of our forces, against the measures with whose aid capitalism is increasing the misery of the workers.”[38]

And one of the most important “measures with whose aid capitalism is increasing the misery of the workers” will inevitably be the attack on the trade unions and the maintenance of the unorganised workers in the plants at the expense of the organised workers.

The discussion as it has already taken place, has revealed in our opinion a very grave confusion on the part of the comrades who oppose the editorial precisely on the lines indicated by Trotsky.



The question of “nons first” is taken out of its context and tends to become the focal point of the discussion on redundancy, thereby standing the discussion on its head. We propose therefore, to elaborate somewhat, the editorial on the policy as well as on the tactical issues and hope thereby to re-establish a correct relationship between strategy and tactics.

The fluctuations of employment, redundancy, during the period of transition and before the end of the war in the Far East; the readjustment of industry before the general crisis, throwing millions on the streets; the possibility of a post-war boom lasting a year or two – all these are important for us in determining our factory and industrial tactics. But they do not affect our general transitional programmatic demands, which are conceived and arise out of the structural crisis of capitalism. At most, conjunctural and transitional, these fluctuations in employment would determine the weight to be given to slogans and propaganda. But whatever the immediate fluctuation, we base our programme on the perspective of mass unemployment.

Despite the optimism of sections of the Labour, Stalinist and trade union leaders as to the future prospects under capitalism with a “progressive” regime, the masses are sceptical and uneasy. Correctly, they instinctively fear mass unemployment and the repetition of the suffering of the last post-war period of crisis. In this the instinct of the masses is entirely sound.

In opposition to all other trends in the labour movement, we Trotskyists have a programme based upon this real crisis of capitalism, which answers the questions of the masses on every point.

One thing we have in common, so it appears at least, not only with other workers’ organisations, but with the petit bourgeoisie, is the demand for full employment and decent living conditions for all. But having said this together, we immediately part company, because we alone seriously fight for this end and lay down a programme of struggle. Briefly, our programme can be summarised

as follows:

Work and decent living conditions for all, from which arises the sliding scale of hours and wages, the latter fixed at a guaranteed minimum; and,

A general plan of industrial production and public works, which, from the point of view of the workers necessitates factory committees and workers' control.

Out of the struggle for these transitional demands we daily raise the question of power.

The factory committees are conceived of as organisations uniting the workers for the fulfilment of these demands and the whole question is linked to the expropriation of the separate groups of capitalists at first and Labour to power.

During the war, this aspect of our transitional programme has been pushed into the background by the objective turn of events. But with the evolution in the international situation, particularly in "liberated" Europe at the present moment, this aspect of our programme comes to the forefront and can act as a torch, settling alight all that is decaying and burning it to the ground.

## **Workers' control**

As the war approaches its end and the war market collapses, capitalist war time "planning" (possible only because of the unlimited market) disintegrates into the anarchy of the pre-war market. The chaotic planlessness of capitalism is more readily exposed. In response to the growing demand from the mass of the workers for a plan which will keep them in work, all the labour organisations

(and even the middle sections of the capitalist class) demand a “plan of production.”

But the demobilisation of industry, the transformation of labour from one industry to another and from one part of the country to another, all these can be effectively planned only if there is workers’ control of industry. And this demand, whilst offering the only effective answer to the chaos which accompanies the capitalist change-over from war to peace production, at the same time separates us effectively from the renegades and traitors in the trade unions and labour movement. These gentlemen, in the words of the Transitional programme, “...stop short in pious trepidation before the thresholds of the trusts and their business secrets.”

We must explain to the workers that workers’ control of industry is not of course, socialism. But it is a transitional step towards socialism. The capitalists still privately own and manage industry, but their ramifications are under the open observation of the factory and trade union organisations.

The workers must have access to the plan of production. They must have access to the “secrets” of the banks, heavy industries and transport systems. Only then will the workers be able to effectively counter the “plans” of the government and its bosses – the trusts; only then will the workers be in a position to offer a genuine plan as an alternative solution.

By patient explanation of the need for the working class to fight for workers’ control in the factory and industrial organisations, we will give conscious direction to the coming workers’ struggles. But once the workers grasp the need for workers’ control, and effect it, we are already on the road to socialist revolution. The next stage of explaining the credits and debits of capitalist society becomes simple: what share of the national income is eaten and squandered by the capitalists as a class, as well as what share is taken by the individual capitalist owner or group of shareholders; what swindles take place to

avoid taxation, etc., by the trusts and banks. A concrete picture of squandering of labour resources and of actual labour as a result of the anarchy which arises out of the capitalist lust for profits can be drawn.

With all these mal-ramifications of the capitalists under the close and constant observation of the trade unions and factory organisations, it would not be long before the workers swept the system and its capitalist benefactors into the dustbin of history.

The close-down of industry poses the question of a large scale industrial plan. In answer to the capitalists who close down the factories, on the grounds that contracts have ceased and there is no more market, our party agitates for the opening of the closed factories and their resumption as public utilities. In such cases the workers and technicians would directly manage the factories through the factory committees.

The full revolutionary significance of such a step is demonstrated by a resolution recently adopted by the new Belgian Miners' Union demanding the opening of the closed mines previously operated by collaborationists and their operation under the control of the trade unions and factory committees. Obviously, the leaders put forward such a demand as the result of the pressure of the masses and not as a programme of struggle to give a lead to the workers, unless, of course, they are under the influence of the fourth internationalists who are giving a revolutionary lead.

In South Wales the capitalists are threatening to close down almost the entire new industry as well as the older tinplate plants. Here our programme would find an immediate response among the mass of the workers, who in any case are not among the most class conscious in the country. It would be possible to link our transitional programme up with the expropriation of these industries. The coal mining industry is a classic example where the slogan of expropriation, or nationalisation without compensation is immediately applicable. All the time we

link our programme with Labour to power and the seizure of power by the working class.

That section of our international Transitional programme should be repeatedly studied and concretised in the present stage of the struggle.

It is on the basis of these political and economic alternatives to the capitalist crisis and collapse, and on the basis of the factory committees, that we bind the workers, organised and unorganised, together in common struggle.

But side by side with our generalised forms of struggle, we are faced with the partial struggles which arise out of the real relation of forces at every given stage. To turn one's back on these daily problems, hold up our hands in horror and say: "we have our programme, if we can't get that we won't contaminate ourselves" is to replace Marxian tactics with sectarian phrases.

It is impossible to write a blueprint of tactics from which the party cadres must not deviate in the course of the coming struggles. A flare-up in one industry or area, the beginning of a wave of stay-in strikes, etc., all these problems will demand concrete answers and will arise but of the struggle itself. But one important tactical consideration is constant while capitalism remains: the defence and extension of the mass trade union organisations – at least until they are replaced by more revolutionary and more widespread forms of organisation. This is particularly true in Britain where the trade unions have now 40 percent and more of the industrial proletariat.

## **Industrial unionism**

Inside the unions we have the duty to be foremost in conducting a struggle against sectarian, craft ideology. In demonstrating that the technical development of capitalism has outmoded craft skill and created all the conditions for its complete elimination, we show the necessity for industrial organisations. We attack the conception of the skilled worker who demands the operation of the Dilution Agreement[39], not because it protects the positions he has won in the past (or so he thinks) but because it splits the workers who are already organised in the mass trade unions, and weakens the fight against the ruling class.

To the organised as well as the unorganised workers we have to explain the character of the trade unions as class organisations. We do not thereby fail to point to their reactionary features, in particular the treachery of the present leadership. But despite their shortcomings, the trade unions are class organisations and have to be defended from capitalist attack. Simultaneously they have to be defended from being undermined by the more backward strata of the unorganised workers, and in particular that strata which refuses to be organised.

*In a period of rising unemployment the slogan of the closed shop is raised as a defensive slogan. Faced with attacks on the part of the ruling class against their existing wage conditions, as well as unemployment, the unorganised workers will turn in greater numbers towards trade union organisation. Particularly if they receive a fighting lead from the union organisation in the shop.*

The exact tactics which will have to be pursued in our task of uniting the workers as a whole and of defending the trade unions, will depend on the relationships that exist from factory to factory, districts and trades. But insofar as we cannot succeed in moving the workers in the direction of conscious seizure of power, we have still to defend the positions already won.

It may be possible to unite the workers in the first stages of the struggle against unemployment in stay-in strikes and other forms of struggle. Our party comrades

will strive to the utmost in this direction. But we will have to base ourselves on the level of consciousness of the masses.

Of course, we have the most optimistic perspectives in the struggles that lie ahead, but there will be, we think, many ebbs and flows in the tide of battle before the class enemy will be finally defeated. The workers will have to retreat from time to time before the counter-revolutionary onslaughts of the reaction.

It is precisely during the coming period, when workers are being thrown into the unemployment queues and when the worker-soldiers will be returning home from Europe to swell these ranks, that the bosses will inevitably seek to weaken and destroy their organisations. By this means the capitalists can better strike blows at the living standards of the workers. Under such conditions, necessity and not desire, will compel us to retreat at certain stages of the coming struggles. We will have to fall back and defend the positions we already hold. We will have to give ground in order to regroup the fighting forces of the proletariat in readiness for the favourable stages in the conjuncture which will again permit us to press forward with our revolutionary offensive demands.

But, in order that tactical retreats shall not become routs, it is necessary to have one's mind completely clear regarding the layout of the defensive lines to prepare our second line trenches well in advance so as not to tail on behind the masses at the decisive moment. Above all, the mass trade unions are the main lines of labour defence. In the Transitional programme comrade Trotsky took this proposition as self evident to the cadres of the Fourth International when he wrote:

“They [the workers] must defend their mouthful of bread, if they cannot increase or better it. There is neither the need nor the opportunity to enumerate here those separate partial demands which time and again arise on the basis of concrete circumstances – national, local, professional...”

The importance of the trade unions as class organisations was commented upon again and again by Marx, as also the question of their defence. As far back as 1846 Marx wrote, polemicising against Proudhon:

“If the first aim of resistance was merely the maintenance of wages, combinations, at first isolated, constitute themselves into groups as the capitalists in their turn unite in the idea of repression, and in face of always united capital, the maintenance of association becomes more necessary to them than that of wages.” (Karl Marx, Poverty of philosophy – our emphasis)

Our comrades might say that Marx was talking about the defence of the trade unions from the attacks of the united bourgeoisie, but we on the contrary, are talking about uniting the trade unionists against the unorganised workers. But this conception would be entirely false. It was just this consideration – the need to prepare ourselves to defend the workers’ organisations against the attacks of united capital which will accompany so-called redundancy – that motivated our raising the tactical question relating to the closed shop.

The proposition of non-unionists going first when actual sackings take [place], and relating this tactical proposition to the constant struggle for the closed shop, is nothing more than preparing the cadres for the correct solution to problems which will have to be solved.

Our critics may argue that even in these conditions “nons first”, and after that, dismissals on the basis of seniority are far from perfect positions to occupy. With that we are in agreement. But we cannot expect that partial and minimum demands will be free of shortcomings. Those comrades who disagree with these tactical demands have the duty to counter-pose better ones, or at least show where and how they could be improved. Instead, we are confronted with such infantile ultra-leftism as: “We do not recognise the crisis of capitalism”; “We



will not recognise the sackings even when they have taken place.”

Our demands put forward under conditions of actual transfers and dismissals, that the trade unions, the shop stewards and factory committees must control transfers and dismissals, that the trade union organisations must be protected and that the first to go shall be those non-unionists whom we have, right up to the sackings taking place, tried to recruit to the side of the unions on the basis of our general propaganda and participation in union struggles – these demands are opposed, because, it is claimed, they will split the ranks of the workers. But unity of the workers is an empty phrase, or worse – it can lead to betrayal if it is raised to the proportion of an end in itself and thereby self sufficient.

Comrade Trotsky often warned us against the dangers of making a fetish of such abstractions and showed the necessity for struggle, under certain conditions, between even the different sections of the organised workers – let alone with the most backward layers of the proletariat. In *Where is Britain going* Trotsky wrote on the question of trade unionists paying the political levy:

“While standing on the general principles for permitting backward and non-conscious workers to join unions, we do so not from an abstract principle of freedom of opinion or freedom of conscience, but from considerations of revolutionary expediency. But these same considerations tell us that in Britain, where 90 percent of industrially organised workers pay political levies, some consciously, others out of desire not to violate solidarity, and where only 10 percent decide to throw down an open challenge to the Labour Party, it is necessary to carry on a systematic struggle against this 10 percent, to force them to feel that they are renegades, and to ensure to trade unions the right to exclude them as strike-breakers. In the last resort, if the abstract citizen has the right to vote for any party he chooses, the workers’ organisations have the right not to allow into their midst those citizens whose political conduct is inimical to the interests of the working class. The struggle of the trade unions for the right of refusal to allow the unorganised workers into the factory has long been known as a manifestation of workers’ ‘terrorism’, or, in the language of today, Bolshevism.

It is just in Britain that this very method may and ought to be introduced into the Labour Party, which has grown up as the direct extension of the trade unions.”

Our present demands could in no sense be regarded as less inimical to the abstract unity of the workers than this proposition of comrade Trotsky.

At the same time this makes clear a point that we believed would be understood as axiomatic by every member. Such tactics can only be successfully applied in suitable circumstances. Let us reiterate, it is not we but our critics who have elevated these tactical formulas to the status of political principles. If, in any particular establishment, despite all our efforts, it has not been possible to win a majority into the union, then it would be fantastic to suggest that we could rally the major part of the workers on our demand that “nons” go first. This should be self-evident, if one only pauses to pose the question: “who would propose it if there were not a trade unionist in the factory?” Further, on this point, what our critics do not appear to understand is the danger constituted by scabs in non-revolutionary conditions, when mass unemployment exists.

Under conditions of manpower shortage, it is not so difficult to get unionists and non-unionists alike out on strike in defence of a victimised shop steward or union militant; but in conditions of mass unemployment it will be an entirely different matter, as any comrade who had conducted pre-war struggles of such a character can well testify. To come forward under such conditions and demand equal rights for scabs and even plain nons, as for the organised workers, is to court disaster. Moreover, even from the standpoint of trade unionism, unless you are prepared to conduct a struggle in the interests of the union, not only against the bosses but against the backward, unorganised strata of the workers, then you will only lose any respect which you may have won among the best of these unorganised elements. They will justify their abstention from union membership on the grounds that the union is not capable or prepared to conduct a struggle in its own defence and in defence of its members.

Our comrades argue that there are many unorganised workers who are militant fighters and who only remain outside of the trade unions because of the sell-out of the leadership; and that there are many reactionary types who hold a union card. That if the policy of the PB were put into effect, these militants would be driven out of the plants whilst backward elements with a trade union ticket would be protected. No-one can doubt that in many cases this would be quite true. But our policy and tactics do not depend on [this] or that example or incident. Failure to generalise is impressionism and empiricism and not Marxism. As soon as these militants see that the organised workers are going to make a stand, they will be the first to stream into the unions. We have to base ourselves on the experiences of the working class in a century and a half of struggle. The trade unions contain the distilled experience and organisation of the overwhelming mass of the organised workers, and in that sense of our class. Without making a fetish of the trade unions, it is possible to say that the revolution will not be accomplished in Britain without them. To equate them to the unorganised mass is about the same order of mistake as equating the trade unions to the revolutionary party. But in essence, by refusing to generalise, this is precisely what the comrades of the opposition do.

Another corollary which ought to be self-evident is that the demand for “nons” to go first automatically flows from the demand of a closed shop. The closed shop means that every “non” shall go off the job if he refuses to join the union, at all stages of the struggle, whether there is unemployment or not. Literally thousands of strikes have been waged on this basis during the war period and before. How fantastic to promise that we struggle for the closed shop, for the sacking of “nons” during the time of hiring, but not during the time of firing! What a blatant contradiction!

We have been told by some comrades that the workers are demanding shop stewards’ consultation or control over sackings and transfers, but are not raising the “demands” put forward by the PB that “nons” should go first. In reply to this we can only ask: “For what do they want shop stewards’ control?” Obviously such control can only be operative through factory committees, i.e. the trade union organisation in the plant. Under such conditions is it not obvious that the “nons” will be the first to go? Is it suggested that where the shop stewards have

control of sackings and transfers, they will pursue any other policy? Will they refuse to discriminate between an organised and unorganised worker? The workers will answer with the same voice as ours. For we will repeat one of the most important points made by comrade Tearse in the editorial, which so correctly evaluated the entirely sound, and if we might say so, revolutionary action of these workers: "...who should control transfers or dismissals? Our answer is that in connection with the "closed shop" demand we campaign for trade union control of any transfers or dismissals through the medium of the shop stewards or factory committee."

Of course, in a badly organised factory the demand for consultation with the shop stewards before dismissals take place, or shop stewards' control of dismissals, can act as a powerful means of recruiting to the trade unions, particularly if it is linked to a determined and fighting attitude on the part of the nucleus of organised workers.

The shop stewards may, of course want to operate the Dilution Agreement. As has been outlined elsewhere, we would struggle against this. But it is highly inconceivable that craft workers, operating the Dilution Agreement, will discriminate against a dilutee who is a good trade unionist in favour of a skilled worker who is not in the trade union.

At the recent London aggregate discussion our opponents argued that if we fail to gain majority support for our transitional demand for the sliding scale we must at all costs keep the workers in the factories. We must "refuse to recognise the sackings" even after they take place! Of course we do not exclude the possibility of isolated stay-in strikes and other forms of struggle taking place on the basis of our demand to share out the work, right from the beginning. And we will give leadership to such a movement wherever it is possible. But these are not likely to develop immediately into a co-ordinated national struggle – otherwise, we have nothing less than a revolution. Nor was this the point raised in the London aggregate, for at least half the comrades who spoke for the opposition developed their point to its logical conclusion and refused to

“recognise the crisis of capitalism”, of which unemployment was only one manifestation.

From this completely ultra-left dogma, they landed, consistently in this case, in the sectarian mire. If we are not strong enough to win the demand for the sliding scale, then there is nothing more to be done than to continue to educate the workers on socialist principles. We are too weak, they claimed, to win the demand for the closed shop if we fail to win the major demand.

Let us assume that we are too weak to win either the transitional demand or the demand for the closed shop. What follows from this? We are then compelled to retreat even further back. We might raise such a [demand] as trade unionists should not be discriminated against during transfers and dismissals explaining the reasons, or some such tactical proposition which would serve to defend at least partially the trade union organisation.

But the question is stood on its head by the comrades when they claim that if we are too weak to win the sliding scale, we cannot win the closed shop. Here the transitional demand is equated with the struggle for a partial demand. The strategical struggle with the tactical struggle for the defence of organisation. The whole of working class experience shows that it is possible to rally the workers for the defence of positions already won and are under attack, much more readily, as a general rule, than for offensive struggle.

### **Seniority on the job**

Another question upon which the comrades are somewhat confused is that of seniority. Lest any confusion arise out of inexperience or from the example given in the Industrial Bulletin editorial of the docks, we will restate and elucidate what it means here.

Wherever the principle of the closed shop (de facto or de jure) has been won, as a rule seniority operates. This means that the last to come into the job is the first to go when workers are sacked. This applies rigidly to public utility enterprises, railways and similar enterprises where there is a super-annuation fund or pension at the conclusion of service.

On a well organised building job, as the job grows, passes its curve and nears completion, workers are sacked. The last to come in all trades are sacked first, as these complete their part of the contract.

The workers fought many bitter strike struggles to force an agreement along these lines on the bosses. Its main aim was to establish a general rule, which, not in itself perfect, protected the workers from the whims and victimisation of the foreman and the boss. An employer finds it very difficult to sack an active trade unionist on the basis of this agreement.

In the case of the docks, cited by the Bulletin, the closed shop operated in the docks before the war. The newest workers who were the first to be sacked, were also the newest members of the dockers' section of the TGWU. In this case it so happens that membership on the job coincided with membership in the union.

We would point out that when discussing this question with our docker comrades, members of the PB opposed the dismissal of the newcomers without a struggle to win the whole of the workers on the dock to the policy of sharing out the available work. We tried to demonstrate to the dockers that these new workers should be drawn fully into the union and not left in a probationary, dilutee – or second class section, as they were. In this way we opposed the craft outlook – if one can call dock labouring a craft – and put forward an industrial conception.

In pre-war days the rigid exclusion of “new” labour in the docks while dockers were idle is an example of “seniority” and one of the reasons why the wages of the dockers were so high in comparison with other sections of the working class when there was work to do. The mistake of the dockers in the case cited, was a craft mistake. They refused to allow the additional war time dock labourers to become permanent or full members of the union. Instead of demonstrating an industrial, class attitude welding the bonds of organisation more firmly together, they created a split among the workers who were already organised.

Of course, in some respects, the seniority clause protects the older workers at the expense of the youth. The younger workers are the last into industry and therefore usually the first to go. In the trades, agreements exist which lay down the employment of one apprentice to so many skilled or adult workers. The apprentices, in fact, are usually the last to go. This is not so in the building trade where the job shifts from month to month or period to period. But in the “stable” trades the older workers are undoubtedly protected at the expense of the youth. The seniority rule takes no regard of age, or of dependants. If an older trade unionist comes on the job after a young organised worker the young worker remains on the job when a sacking takes place. What other formula can our comrades suggest as a general alternative? This one was fashioned out of a century of trade union struggles.

Our critics triumphantly say: How can your policy unite the workers? How can you recruit unorganised workers, usually the newcomers into the trade unions on the basis of seniority? If they don't come into the unions they are the first to be sacked; and if they do come in they are the first to go anyway, since they are usually the newest workers. You recognise the sackings – what is more you decide who is to be sacked and therefore take responsibility. We on the other hand unite the organised and unorganised together on the slogan of “no sackings”, before, during and even after they have been sacked.

This radicalism is, in reality an evasion in facing up to the real situation and

burying the issue. It reminds one of the IRA members who refused to “recognise” the court but got 20 years just the same. The class struggle would be very simple and easy indeed if we had to take action only against the capitalists.

When we draw the unorganised workers into the union we don't hold out a membership card as a magic meal ticket. We tell the workers bluntly that trade unionists will be unemployed as well as “nons”. But we can only protect each other and our class if we are united in class organisations. Only the will to fight together, united in the mass organisations and on the basis of a correct programme can provide a final solution to the problems.

The seniority agreement does not discriminate between workers on the basis of union membership. Let it be stated that the workers – young and old – seek a measure of security and stability within the system as it is. In general the young workers, not only accept the rule of seniority, but understand its significance and look forward to its protection as well as the old.

In conducting a struggle against the Dilution Agreement and craft outlook we fight to have the seniority agreement applied to dilutees as well. So that the craft worker would go from the plant before dilutee, if the craft worker was last on the job. Our answer is a class answer: organisation. It unites the craft and dilutee worker and gives a concrete answer to a concrete problem: who is to go? Our critics, substituting phrases for a correct tactical answer, precisely split the workers and force the craft workers to protect themselves at the expense of the dilutees in face of the very concrete attacks made by the employers.

## **Control of labour**

At the discussion at the London aggregate one of our critics hurled the jibe at us that if we pursued our policy of trade union control of sackings to its logical



conclusion, we would next be demanding that the trade unions control the labour exchanges! For the benefit of these comrades we would explain that there is nothing new or unheard of in this proposition. We will quote from a resolution proposed by the Bolshevik faction and adopted at the first All Russian conference of factory and shop committees on the eve of October:

“The organisation of workers’ control is a manifestation of the same healthy spirit in the sphere of industrial production as are party organisations in the sphere of politics, trade unions in employment, co-operatives in the sphere of consumption and literary clubs in the sphere of culture.

“...The plan of land labour must be carried out under the supervision of the peasants’ and the land workers’ organisations; ... the natural organs of workers’ control inside the industrial plant will be the factory shop and similar committees; and in the labour market, the trade unions.

“Employment bureaux must be placed under the control and management of the trade unions as class organisations.” (our emphasis)

Are our comrades going to suggest, that under such conditions trade unionists would be considered “equal”? Of course, our comrades will reply: “but there was a regime of dual power, the revolution was on the order of the day.” Precisely. But dual power will never arise except as a result of a struggle. Our task is to prepare for dual power. Shop stewards’ control of sackings with all the practical conclusions that flow from it, including the protection of the mass organisations and “nons first” as part of that preparation. Of course, we fight for the day when unionists and “nons” will control through the factory committee or soviet and we can say not the workers, but the boss must go. But every task in its right time. Our comrades see only the negative function – the unhappy task of deciding which workers shall go and which remain. They conceive of workers’ control being exercised here exclusively against a section of the working class. They fail to see the revolutionary significance that the organised workers have

control, and that this control is already a measure of dual power.

When the capitalists sack the workers from their plants during a period of lay-off, they take good care that the men who go are the men who cause them the most trouble – if they can. In general, they protect the unorganised workers, and sack the trade unionists so that they can weaken the cohesive resistance of the workers to later wage cuts and inroads into working conditions. The question of who is to control the flow of labour (in and out) is a question of conflict. A conscious fighting leadership in any plant will try and see to it that the organised workers control. We do not choose the ground of battle; it opens up before us. Our job is not only to be aware of our general strategic aim and plan of campaign but to be acquainted with and boldly face the tactical details and problems that face us at every stage.

### **Full maintenance**

An argument advanced by some of the comrades that to adopt the demand for full maintenance is to recognise the principle of unemployment and we should refuse to do so, is taking sectarianism to its extreme. We recognise facts, and insofar as unemployment is a fact it is a “principle” of capitalism. But this is not to say that we accept the “right” of the capitalists to keep workers out of production, redundant or unemployed. It is very good that our comrades will tell the worker on the dole that he should be working and explain the sliding scale of hours. But the unemployed worker will also ask: “but what about my income now?” If our comrades reply: “We have a programme – the sliding scale of hours – but it does not say anything about maintenance because we do not recognise the principle of unemployment” we would agree with the inevitable rude reply of the worker.

The bureaucracy of the AEU see this question better than some of our comrades. It is no accident that they put forward the demand that redundant workers should

be maintained on the basis of a 47 hour week. In their hands such a demand is a reformist and utopian stop-gap. They lack a programme; they fear the question of power. But our people should take up the demand of the AEU bureaucracy. Force them to match their resolutions with deeds; expose them before every employed and unemployed worker. “It is a very good demand – full maintenance. But what action do you propose to take, to implement it?” Workers who would turn from our comrades who talk about refusing to recognise that unemployed workers also need to eat will not be misled by the empty phrases of Jack Tanner.

## **Conclusion**

Let us again repeat: our strategical objective is the seizure of power developed through the transitional programme. During certain stages of these strategical operations, we may, almost certainly will, have to carry out tactical advances and defensive retreats. Such a tactical manoeuvre, conceived as a means of defending the trade union organisations during such a retreat, is the operation of “nons first” at the time when we are not strong enough to prevent dismissals from taking place. It is not and cannot be anything more than this.

If we place ourselves on the standpoint of our opponents and relinquish without a battle, the right of the workers to control sackings on their terms, we may thereby retain our moral sanctity. It simply means, however, that we hand over the initiative to the bosses to attack and strangle the workers’ organisations.

What our critics have done is to confuse recognition with responsibility. By recognising sackings when they take place, and it is an elementary part of the Marxist method to recognise what is, we take no more responsibility for the curse of unemployment or the crisis of capitalism in its totality, than we do when we recognise the existence of war and develop our military policy accordingly. It is because of the recognition of the “crisis of capitalism” by our international

leadership, above all comrade Trotsky, that we have today a Transitional programme and a “military tactic” to offer to the masses, while the sectarians stew in their own juice completely isolated from the struggle of the masses.

The fact that we are forced to solve partial problems does not mean that we abandon our transitional slogans even for a moment. Nowhere or at any time is it suggested that we give up the struggle for a sliding scale even after mass sackings have taken place. All we demand is recognition of the fact that the struggle for the strategic goal, involves participation in the tactical battles of the masses to hold onto positions already won. Those who prove incapable of holding those positions will never be able to lead to an advance. In the words of the Transitional programme:

“The Bolshevik Leninist stands in the front line trenches of all kinds of struggles, even when they involve only the most modest material interests or democratic rights of the working class. He takes active part in the mass trade unions for the purpose of strengthening them and raising their militancy.”

Our struggle for the closed shop during periods of redundancy is at all times “for the purpose of strengthening” the workers’ organisations “and raising their militancy” falls right into place here. It is subordinate to and in no way contradicts our strategical slogans. By emphasising this fact yet again, and adding that we always proceed on the maxim that tactics must be subordinate to and must not conflict with our strategical considerations; that the relationships in this connection are that of part to the whole, we believe that we have outlined the position so that it can be understood by every member in the party. In so doing we hope to close the door against any accidental confusion or misunderstanding that might have arisen as to the meaning of the editorial in the Industrial Bulletin.

In concluding, we would urge our comrades not to lose their heads or be impatient. We have recently gone through a period when there have been more

jobs than workers. Trade union work has been easy and the party has made great strides. But we are entering a period when the number of workers will be far greater than the number of jobs and trade union work will have to be conducted in a very different milieu.

Comrade Trotsky gave good advice to impatient comrades who suffer from radicalism, when he wrote the following lines in *Their morals and ours*:

“The ‘Trotskyists’ learned the rhythm of history, that is, the dialectics of the class struggle. They also learned, it seems and to a certain degree successfully, how to subordinate their subjective plans and programmes to this objective situation. They learned not to fall into despair over the fact that the laws of history do not depend upon their individual tastes... They learned to subordinate their individual tastes to the laws of history.

# **Labour Party conference Labour lefts sell out**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 6 No. 10, December 1944]

## **Aneurin Bevan supports government**

“I do not want to break up the national government on this issue.”

The Labour Party conference this year is one of the most fateful in the whole history of the labour movement. All the deliberations of the conference were overshadowed by the tragic events in Greece. Greece was the test, and on Greece the Labour leaders have betrayed the working class of Greece, of Britain and of the whole world.

The attention of the entire world was focused on the Labour Party conference. The workers of Europe and the world were looking to the Labour Party to give a lead. During the course of the last few days, despite the veil of the British censorship, the situation in Greece has become clear. It is not a civil war that is taking place in Greece, but an undeclared war of British imperialist intervention, to impose on the Greek people their own reactionary puppets, against the wishes of the Greek masses.

Yet the resolution drawn up by the executive and passed by the conference, fails to openly condemn the counter-revolutionary and anti-democratic actions of British imperialism. It commits the Labour leaders to nothing, but confines itself to vague generalities in which there are so many loopholes that the government could impose any policy they please on the Greek people.

### **Ernest Bevin sold out**

And Ernest Bevin, in a speech which would have disgraced Ramsay MacDonald, came out even more blatantly and openly for the policy of imperialism than Churchill dared to do. He revealed that the criminal intervention in Greece had the full support of the Labour members of the cabinet. In defiance of working class opinion in Britain, he said, as if to emphasise that they would behave in the same way again:

“Anything I say will be with deliberation because it must have an effect on our attitude to other countries besides Greece.”

In revealing the anxieties of British imperialism, which Bevin and the Labour leaders have taken upon themselves to defend, he said:

“I took part with my socialist colleagues in the whole of these discussions going over nearly four years, trying to work out the best way to handle these terrifying problems that would arise at the end of the war.”

In other words, the Labour leaders are preparing and conniving with the capitalist class for intervention against any revolution in Europe.

Cynically he revealed that both Stalin and Roosevelt had agreed that while Bulgaria and Rumania should be territories where Russia kept “order” (i.e. spheres of influence), Britain should keep “order” in Greece.

Bevin’s main preoccupation, like that of his master, Churchill, is to hold up any possibility of the peoples of Europe settling accounts with the capitalist quislings and traitors, who have exploited and battered on them for centuries. Churchill could not declare openly his motives for intervention in Greece, but Bevin, the lackey of the master, has blurted it out:

“The British empire, whether we like it or not, cannot abandon its position in the Mediterranean. It is impossible for it to do so.”

This is the reason for British intervention in Greece and Italy, and tomorrow other countries. The Mediterranean is “Mare Nostrum” (our sea). Among other things, this is one of the main objectives for which British imperialism has been fighting the war: domination of the Mediterranean for markets, raw materials and above all, for the route to India and the Middle East. And this man, Bevin, comes to a conference which is supposed to represent the interests of the working class, to defend nothing less than a full blown imperialist counter-revolutionary programme.

In relation to the European peoples, he stands – as did Noske and Scheidemann[40], the German Labour leaders – as an open supporter of counter-revolution. We see the result of Noske’s policy in Germany today; Bevin’s policy, if it succeeds, will have no different result. The ruling class will use Bevin and then cast him aside as the German ruling class contemptuously thrust the social democrats into the concentration camps, after they had no more use for them.



*What a shameful speech! Bevin should have been hooted off the platform and driven from the labour movement.*

## **Aneurin Bevan serves as left cover**

But the workers are already disillusioned in Bevin by his actions in the government in the course of the war. They are seeking leadership elsewhere. They have been looking to Aneurin Bevan and other leaders in the “left” wing of the Labour Party. Since the debate on Regulation 1AA, Aneurin Bevan has stepped forth as an opponent of the Labour executive. He has spoken in opposition in Parliament on Regulation 1AA, on the Greek and other questions. This conference was the test of what his words were worth.

Neither he nor any other of the so-called left-wing delegates had the courage to come out with a fighting socialist lead which would have resounded not only in the conference hall, but from Land’s End to John O’Groats[41].

Aneurin Bevan started off by attacking Ernest Bevin’s speech:

“One complete answer to Mr Bevin is that only three bodies of public opinion in the world have gone on record in his support – fascist Spain, fascist Portugal, and the majority of the Tories in the House of Commons.”

He then went on to say:

“This conference should go on record condemning the action of the government and insist that our representatives inside the government should exercise a more decisive influence on the conduct of our affairs, or leave the Tories to do their own dirty work.”

Once having stated this, the obvious course of action for anyone taking this position seriously, would have been to demand an end to the infamous and quisling collaboration with the British Tories in doing their dirty work in this and other countries. For this is what the Labour leaders have been doing for the last four years. But delegates could have asked Aneurin Bevan “Where do we go from here?” Which indeed they did. Shouts from the body of the hall called to him “We agree with all that, but what is your alternative?” Bevan lamely remarked “This is unfair, because the EC had not permitted amendments.” But this excuse is no answer! Bevan wants to have his cake and eat it. He wants to support the government and the coalition in the imperialist war, and allow himself the luxury of empty criticism. Bevan says that the Labour leaders shouldn’t do the dirty work of the Tories. The rank and file Labour workers might well ask that Bevan should not do the dirty work for the Labour ministers.

As a harmless critic who does not take his criticism seriously, but puts it forward merely as a means of diverting the anger of the Labour workers, he plays the role of lightning-conductor for the Labour ministers. He said: “I don’t want to break up the national government on this issue.” In that case, Mr. Bevan, you are as responsible for the crimes of Churchill and the ruling class as Ernest Bevin himself. In fact, your role is more dangerous. Because, while criticising in words, you prevent the masses from moving against this infamous counter-revolutionary government and its crimes. Those who are not with us are against us, that is the decisive test in this case. You try telling the Greek workers who are dying from the bullets of British imperialism about the responsibility of this government. You take open responsibility for Churchill and his crimes – which is your cleverly concealed position – to the steel workers of Ebbw Vale and the miners of South Wales, and see what they will tell you!

When it comes to the test, you are on the other side. You may say these are hard words, Bevan. But there can be no fooling when the destiny of hundreds of millions in Europe, and the destiny of the British working class, depends on the actions of the working class movement, and not mere words.

Bevan revealed how tense the feeling of the workers is, when he warned that while they might decide one thing, the workers in uniform might decide another – and then where would they be?

But he gave no lead to the workers of Britain. If Bevan can help it, the coalition is to continue – until such time as the Tories have no more use for it.

The bitterness of the rank and file was revealed by the uproar at the conference, due to the flagrant manoeuvres of the platform and the chairman in not allowing amendments to the resolution, not only on this question but on others.

Had a clear lead been put to end this disastrous coalition and take power on a socialist programme, the rank and file would undoubtedly have responded enthusiastically. The speeches of the trade union bureaucrats which condemned the resolution faint-heartedly – Benstead of the NUR, Griffiths of the miners and others, reflecting the pressure of the rank and file – all sheltered behind the cowardly statement that they could not break up the government. The temper of the rank and file was shown by the numerous references to the glorious episode of the Jolly George[42], when the British workers prevented Churchill from making war on Russia by stopping supplies in 1920, and the call for the same action today.

On all questions, on the other hand, the cowardly and treacherous attitude of the leadership was revealed. In declaring that the German and Japanese masses were responsible for the crimes of their rulers and the demand that they should pay,

they confirmed their Vansittart attitude. On all major problems that confront the working class today, the leadership stood behind the capitalists, while the rank and file were dragged unwillingly behind them for lack of an alternative leadership.

The one thing the Labour leaders were more terrified of than anything else, was the possibility of being forced onto the road of taking power themselves. But conference decisions are one thing: the decisions of the masses are another; the last word rests with the masses.

### **Now is the time to end the coalition**

Workers! Look where this collaboration with the ruling class by the Labour leaders has led us. While the Labour leaders have been exhorting the workers to “go to it” and the soldiers to die “for democracy” they have led them to this shameful pass. Today your brothers and sons are dying in Greece, to preserve a reactionary clique of royalist fascists, to preserve the profits and interests of British capitalists.

The workers cannot be satisfied with such a result of the Labour Party conference, when it is clear to everyone that Greece is not the last, but only the first of a series of episodes of like character. It is time that this shameful coalition was ended! There is no excuse for waiting. The mass of the people in Britain are horrified at the crimes of Churchill and the government. Now is the time to expose the Tories in the eyes of the electorate. Now is the time when a majority could easily be gained for Labour. Now, is the time to force a general election. Churchill says that the Greeks have no democratic mandate. Has he got a democratic mandate for his crimes?[43]Let the people of Britain decide. With a fighting policy Labour would overwhelm the Tories at an election.

Workers! Demand that your leaders end this coalition. Greece is a taste of what the Tories hold in store for the workers of all Europe and for Britain if they are allowed to retain control and dictate policy. Our duty to the Greek workers and peasants, our duty to the starving Indians, our duty to our German class brothers struggling against Hitler, our duty to the British workers – all demand that we fight this capitulation to the class enemy.

Workers of the Revolutionary Communist Party will fight side by side with the Labour workers to force the Labour leaders out of the warm ministerial seats to which they have clung for so long. By forcing them to take power, we believe that the working class movement in Britain can take a tremendous step forward. It can serve to expose the fact that the Labour leaders are incapable of serving the interests of the workers. The road will be clear for the Revolutionary Communist Party to attract to its banner the majority of the working class who still have illusions in the Labour leaders.

Support the Revolutionary Communist Party in its fight to end the coalition!

Demand Aneurin Bevan, G. R. Strauss and the other “lefts”, match their words with deeds!

Demand from your leaders, that they end the coalition and fight for power on a socialist programme!

# **Tory post-war plans**

**By Ted Grant (not signed)**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 7 No. 3, April 1945]

## **More sweat, toil and tears for the workers**

Churchill's speech at the Conservative Party conference on March 15th was an indication of the policies and tactics of the ruling class for the general election and the post-war period.

The Tories are moving forward in cunning fashion in order to confuse the electorate and ensure a safe Conservative majority at the polls.

As Churchill has hinted, the general election will not be long delayed after the fall of Hitler and the close of the San Francisco conference.

*Had there been a serious opposition to the Tories the prospects of their coming back to power would be virtually impossible. Yet Churchill is not unduly disturbed.*

One of the trump cards Churchill indicated the Tories would use, is to disguise the ruling class control under the cloak of a “national” administration, it would be difficult for the Labour Party to expose this fraud and sham for what it is, after their participation for five years in a similar masquerade.

In addition to this the Tories have been demagogically attacking “controls”.

But the best weapon in the arsenal of Churchill and the Tories lies in the fact that the main platform on which they will fight the election, will be almost indistinguishable from that put forward by the Labour leaders. It will be difficult for the non-political electors, and even the politically conscious to see the difference between the Tory and the official Labour policy.

No wonder Churchill remarked derisively:

“Our socialist friends have officially committed themselves – much to the disgust of some of their leaders – to a programme for nationalising all the means of production, distribution and exchange.”

The vague speeches of the Labour leaders on “controls” instead of a bold fight for outright nationalisation without compensation, demonstrate the sound basis for Churchill’s contempt for them.

What the Labour leaders fear is the effect of such revelations on the rank and file – thus their weak protestations. Churchill pulled out the usual confidence trick of the Tories in his statement:

“The Four-year Plan will require our utmost effort, and whatever government is in power will not only have to turn White Papers into Acts of Parliament but to make the Acts of Parliament a living, active, and harmonious part of our social system. On all this we must march ahead even while the Japanese war continues and even while the process of bringing back the armies and rehabilitating our trade is incomplete. Never was there a time when so much was planned and projected and so much remains to be turned from paper into action.”

Never was there a time when so many cheap promises were committed to paper – that the capitalist class has no intention of translating into action. British capitalism, which was old and feeble when the war began, has suffered a catastrophic decline in her world position during the conflict. As Churchill soberly expressed it, “victory” for British capitalism, “with all its brilliant trappings appears to our strained and experienced eyes as a deliverance rather than as a triumph.”

Britain has lost her place as the dominant power in the markets of the world. Attempting to put a good face on the hard realities, Churchill casually revealed:

“We, [i.e. British capitalism – EG] have freely sacrificed our foreign investments which brought a large income into this country and helped to redress our trade balance.”

He might have added that British capitalism has lost more than half her shipping, her insurance and banking; that Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are now competitors in goods they formerly imported from Britain; that America has largely grabbed the markets lost by Britain and intends to hang on to them; that British imperialism is in a worse position than she was after the last war.



Churchill's half-panic, half-defiance in relation to his Trans-Atlantic "ally" and her dominant position after the war, is indicated by his references to America without naming her.

"We do not wish to live on the charity or generosity of any nation. We have given our all in the common cause and may claim assistance to recover our normal economy from those we have helped to victory. But we must never agree to found our economic life on the indulgence or favour even of the allies we most dearly cherish."

The worsened position of British capitalism after the last world war turned Lloyd George's promises and schemes into the realities of capitalism – mass unemployment, slump, the dole, starvation wages, misery and insecurity.

But today with the loss of Britain's investments abroad, the position of British capitalism is even more critical. The profits and tribute they gained from abroad are gone. They must squeeze it out of the toil and suffering of the British workers. If British capitalism is to survive and compete it must reduce the standard of living to a lower level than anything endured by the British workers for decades!

And Churchill, while using glittering phrases intended to fool the workers in one section of his speech, used others to convey the situation to his audience of bankers and capitalists, officers and pampered youth.

"Let there be no mistake about it, it is no easy, cheap-jack utopia of airy phrases that lies before us. This is no time for windy platitudes and glittering advertisements..."

And in another passage:

“Blood, sweat, toil, and tears! There may be less blood and fewer tears, we thank God for that hope. But mental toil and physical sweat, the conscious, united resolve of every man and woman to give all that is in them, will be required of us long after the last bomb or cannon has ceased to thunder.”

Thus the reward for the terrible exertions and patient endurance of the masses in the war is... further intensified toil and sweat! And at the end of the toil and sweat? A third imperialist war! Already the imperialists of all lands are preparing for the naked struggle for markets, raw materials, colonial spheres of influence, and strategic bases which must inevitably culminate in in armed struggle! Britain announces she must double her exports or more. America replies by a programme of trebling hers. The competition between Britain and America for the markets of the world will be more intense than the embittered competition between Britain and Germany, which led to the present war. The armaments race is on. Bevin announces that Britain must have an army of 4,000,000 men after the war. ARP is to be continued[44]. While in the past the misery in the distressed areas left the capitalists unmoved, now they have a plan to spread industry over the country – for strategic reasons! Lennox-Boyd, under Secretary for Air, declared bluntly at a meeting of workers that a factory in south-east London had to be removed because it would be a vulnerable target in the next war!

Thus the farce to be enacted at San Francisco is merely designed to smooth out the minor differences between the great powers, keeping the small powers in order, and lulling the masses into a false sense of security until they are thrust into the next war!

These are the outlines of the future world which British and world capitalism are preparing. One word of good advice was given by Churchill, which although put forward hypocritically, the advanced workers would do well to adopt.

“All my experience of the British people, which is a long one, convinces me that never at any moment more than this have they wished and meant to face realities, and woe betide those public men who seek to slide into power down the slippery slope of vain and profligate undertakings. This is no time for humbug and blandishments but for grim stark facts and figures...”

If the Labour and trade union leaders accepted this idea as a basis for their policy, Churchill and the Tories would be snowed under in the coming general election, and Labour would gain an overwhelming majority at the polls. All that would be necessary would be to tell the workers the truth! Give them the grim facts and figures! Give them too, a fighting alternative. A socialist Britain and a socialist Europe! An end to the nightmare of unemployment, hunger, want, fascism and war winch are inevitable if capitalism survives!

At no time have the Labour leaders warned the workers of the real critical situation of British capitalism. Morrison makes speeches chiding the capitalists for taking too gloomy a view of the future. The capitalist politicians do not hide the facts from their class; but the Labour leaders do all in their power to hide the truth from the working class. Instead of demonstrating the impossibility of improving the conditions of the working class while the capitalist system remains, they are offering a programme of reforms (which in any case would not substantially increase the standards of living for the workers) such as Beveridge, Housing, etc., etc. Indeed, they have made the statement that whoever comes into power after this election – the Labour Party or the Tories – will have to implement these so-called reforms projected by the present government – and that both sides will expect loyal co-operation from the opposition.

Bevin, Morrison and Greenwood issue speeches in anticipation of the mood of the workers, urging discipline, forbearance and patience. Instead of showing the workers that without action against the landlords there cannot be an effective housing scheme; that without the nationalisation of the factories, far from full employment, there will be 4 to 7 million unemployed; that without a plan in

which the workers and technicians organise and control, there can not be prosperity but only economic chaos; that without strong action against the combines and monopolies, the standard of life for the working class will fall catastrophically.

Who can doubt that if the Labour and trade union leaders explained the situation to the workers they would respond to a fighting socialist lead? But these cowards and traitors prefer to deceive the workers. They don't want to win the next election! They are leaving Churchill to decide when to break the coalition at a time suitable to himself! They are not exposing the fraud of the Tory "reforms" and how can they, when they have helped to put them through Parliament?

If the Labour leaders wanted power, they would immediately break the coalition and wage a campaign of enlightenment throughout the country, showing the workers the only progressive alternative. But they dread the prospect of taking power with a majority because it would show the workers that the Labour Party programme cannot solve a single one of the major problems with which the masses are faced.

*The Revolutionary Communist Party believes that only the programme of Marx and Lenin, the programme of revolutionary communism can solve the problems of the workers. But even today there are millions and millions of workers who still cling to the hope that the Labour leaders will improve the conditions of the workers and even introduce socialism if they came to power. We say to these workers: demand that your leaders tell the workers the truth, cease collaborating with the enemy and fight for power on a socialist programme.*

We will fight side by side with the Labour workers on this basis in loyal co-operation and comradeship to return a Labour government so that the workers can learn from their own experience that the policy of the Labour leaders has nothing in common with socialism or communism.

Already Churchill has been talking of a post general election coalition. His Communist Party lackeys are supporting him in this. The Labour leaders have not decisively and unequivocally rejected the idea of a new coalition with Churchill.

Workers! Demand that your leaders end the coalition now! Demand that they fight for power on a socialist programme! Support the Revolutionary Communist Party!

# **The ILP at the crossroads**

**By Ted Grant**

[Workers' International News, Vol. 5 No. 8, April 1945]

The most important item on the agenda at this year's ILP conference is the question of its relations to the Labour Party.

The NAC has put down a resolution asking for the ILP to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party on the same basis as existed before the ILP voluntarily disaffiliated from the Labour Party.

In making such a complete reversal of the position which it adopted for so many years, one would expect that the leadership (which occasionally makes references to Marx and Lenin as its guide) would draw up a balance sheet of the period since the separation.

The only leading member of the ILP who has attempted to explain the reason for the change, was John McGovern at the ILP summer school of August 1944. In dealing with the history of the ILP as reported in the New Leader of August 19 1944, he made reference to the achievements of the ILP since disaffiliation:

“He considered the position of the party at the time of disaffiliation and

confessed that he thought ‘The ILP’s case was so clear that every intelligent worker would have to accept the ILP attitude and philosophy, and desire to build with it a strong working class movement in this country. A large number of people encouraged the party at that time to believe that this was true, and got it to leave the Labour Party and then proceeded to work their own way back into that party. In those days we went round the country as an independent working class party, and thought that once the faith of the workers in the Labour Party had been destroyed we would be able to transfer these workers from the Labour Party to the ILP. It now transpires that we made errors both in judgment and in policy’.”

“Comrade McGovern began a critical examination of the party policy after disaffiliation, and stated that ‘one early mistake was our association with the Communist Party, especially at a time when there was tremendous antagonism in this country against the CP. In many areas where the ILP had an agreement with the CP a large number of members left the party. This series of united fronts produced small effects, but drove out many workers’.”

“Believing that self-criticism in the party was necessary, the lecturer went on to consider the internal struggles in the party, instancing the RCP, the Trotskyists, and later the disputes between Stalinists and Trotskyists within the Party, which resulted in ‘purges’ and loss of membership. He stated that he had been asked on many occasions, by those who appeared to accept as logical the party position, what guarantee he could give that the development of the ILP would not be similar to that of the Labour Party, and he considered that he could give these individuals no guarantee such as they asked.”

Without giving an analysis of the evolution of the ILP, McGovern echoes the criticism made by Leon Trotsky long ago. Here Marxist theory demonstrates its superiority over centrist empiricism.

Trotsky had pointed out that the manner, the timing and the issue on which the

ILP left the Labour Party were not such as to make the position clear in the eyes of the masses. The issue on which the split occurred – that of refusing to accept the discipline of the Parliamentary Labour Party by the ILP MPs – was not sufficiently clear cut to gain the sympathy and support of the masses. The naive confession of McGovern as to his belief in the automatic turning of the masses from the Labour Party to the ILP is a faithful reflection of the illusions of the entire leadership at the time of the break. A belief which was entirely alien to the teachings of Marxism.

The masses do not automatically accept a party – even if it has a correct policy and programme – but must be won to the programme as a result of correct strategy and tactics. Only if the revolutionary party has a firm theoretical basis and an understanding of the method of approach to the masses – blurred neither by sectarianism nor opportunism – can it prepare for its historic task, the overthrow of capitalism.

Trotsky warned the ILP that their association in a united front with the Stalinist party (which had since the capitulation of the German CP become a thoroughly reactionary obstacle in the path of the working class) would be disastrous for it. Trotsky suggested that the ILP turn its back on the – at that time – tiny CP and face towards the mass organisations of the trade unions and the Labour Party. But the ILP leaders paid no heed. They continued their association with the Stalinists and as late as 1935-36 participated with the Stalinists in the ill-fated “Unity Campaign” together with the Socialist League. This was at a time when the Stalinists in Spain were already campaigning against the brother Party of the ILP – the POUM – as “Trotskyist-fascist” and “fifth columnists”! To this day the leadership of the ILP has not made an analysis of the mistakes made in this period.

The last point made in this quotation from McGovern is an entirely sound one. No party in the world, subjected to the constant pressure and corruption of the capitalist environment, can guarantee itself against degeneration, even though it be the most tested revolutionary and Marxist party developed in history. The



possibility always exists of the party becoming a tool of the capitalists, as are the Labour Party and the Communist Party today. The only precautions that those desiring to build a revolutionary party have, is to ensure that the party is based on the principles and the methods of Marxism; to ensure, on that basis, that every point of view within the party is thoroughly aired and discussed. Only by complete democracy in the party which permits every member or grouping the right to bring forward their point of view, can a live, watchful and educated rank and file be created which will have full confidence in the leadership and simultaneously guard against the possibility of degeneration. These are the only moral and honest means of ensuring a united party and a correct policy. These were the methods of Bolshevism in its great days, and without which the Bolshevik Party could never have been built and succeeded in achieving the conquest of power. The stifling of democratic rights by Zinoviev, and later by Stalin – in itself a reflection of processes taking place within the country – paved the way for the complete disintegration of the mightiest revolutionary weapon the world has ever known. As McGovern has hinted, unfortunately the leadership has not always allowed the full freedom of criticism which is necessary in any party which desires to transform itself into a revolutionary party. In a bureaucratic attitude on the part of any leadership, is contained an uneasiness in the correctness of its policy, past and future.

In preparing to re-affiliate, nowhere has the leadership of the ILP explained the differences, if any, between the situation either of the ILP or the Labour Party which would justify re-affiliation on the same terms as led the ILP to disaffiliate in 1932. Much water has flowed under the bridges since those days; but the character of the Labour Party and its leadership has not changed basically in the interim, except perhaps that the leadership has become even more reactionary than formerly.

And while there have been many profound changes in the composition and outlook of the rank and file of the ILP, the leadership has remained basically with the same outlook as when it was in the Labour Party. They have never broken with reformism, but have maintained a middle way position between reformism and Marxism. This, and only this, explains their present attitude towards the Labour Party and affiliation to it.

In 1935, comrade Trotsky wrote in *Once again: the ILP*, in reply to the question, “Should the ILP seek entry into the Labour Party?”

“At the moment the question is not posed this way. What the ILP must do if it is to become a revolutionary party, is to turn its back on the CP and face the mass organisations. It must put 99 percent of its energies into building up fractions in the trade union movement. At the moment I understand that much of the fractional work can be done openly by ILPers in their capacity of trade union and cooperative members. But the ILP should never rest content; it must build its influence in the mass organisations with the utmost speed and energy. For the time may come, when, in order to reach the masses, it might enter the Labour Party, and it must have tracks laid for the occasion. Only the experience that comes from such fractional work can inform the ILP if and when it must enter the Labour Party. But for all its activity an absolutely clear programme is the first condition, a small axe can fell a large tree only if it is sharp enough.”

What Trotsky is developing here is the idea that affiliation or non-affiliation is not a principled question, but one of tactics. For the revolutionary party, the problem reduces itself to one of how best to reach and influence the mass of the workers and win them to revolutionary socialism. But before one can do that, it is necessary to have a Marxian programme which decisively differentiates the party from all other parties, especially from Labour reformism.

Yet even in its hey-day of “revolutionary socialism”, the ILP never completely broke from parliamentarism and reformism. Today, after 13 years of separation from the Labour Party, the *New Leader* of March 31 1945, published on the eve of the conference to decide the question of affiliation, can write:

“Labour follows ILP”

“The ILP conference meets at Blackpool at Easter. The Labour Party conference meets in the same place at Whitsun.

“The preliminary agenda of the latter conference has just been issued, and it is interesting to compare it with the agenda of the ILP conference.

“Similar subjects are dealt with, and on domestic issues – housing, monopolies and land, for example – there is little difference in principle between many of the resolutions on both agendas. It is when one passes to the resolutions on the peace and the treatment of Germany that the difference becomes most marked, though even here the Labour Party agenda includes resolutions which express the international socialist attitude.

“The truth is, however, that the Labour Party agenda is always better than Labour Party policies.”

This is not at all as the writer of these lines infers: that the Labour Party rank and file is adopting a revolutionary position, and therefore the resemblance. It is because the ILP’s position remains basically reformist that the comparison becomes possible.

The content of the resolutions put before the Labour Party conference this year do not differ from those put forward on any previous years, including the year of disaffiliation, 1932. It remains incomprehensible then, why the ILP disaffiliated at all, if this argument is accepted. No more annihilating criticism could be made than that the resolutions are not much different from those on the Labour Party agenda.

We Trotskyists have been attacked consistently by the ILP leaders for our criticisms of their attitude towards the Labour Party, which veered from left to right. Thus Trotsky said in the same interview quoted above:

“The basic error which was made by some ILPers who withdrew critical support [of the Labour Party] was to assume that the war danger necessitated a change in our appreciation of reformism. But as Clausewitz said, and Lenin often repeated, war is the continuation of politics by other means. If this is true, it applies not only to capitalist parties, but to social democratic parties. The war crisis does not alter the fact that the Labour Party is a workers’ party, which the government party is not. Nor does it alter the fact that the Labour leadership cannot fulfil their promises, that they will betray the confidence which the masses place in them. In peace time the workers will, if they trust in social democracy, die of hunger; in war, for the same reason, they will die from bullets. Revolutionists never give critical support to reformism on the assumption that reformism, in power, could satisfy the fundamental needs of the workers. It is possible, of course, that a Labour government could introduce a few mild temporary reforms. It is also possible that the League [of Nations] could postpone a military conflict about secondary issues – just as a cartel can eliminate secondary economic crises only to reproduce them on a larger scale. So the League can eliminate small episodic conflicts to generalise them into world war.

“Thus, both economic and military crises will only return with an added explosive force so long as capitalism remains. And we know that social democracy cannot abolish capitalism.

“No, in war as in peace, the ILP must say to the workers: ‘The Labour Party will deceive you and betray you, but you do not believe us. Very well, we will go through your experiences with you but in no case do we identify ourselves with the Labour Party programme’.”

What a world of difference between this revolutionary attitude, and the open, boastful identification of the “revolutionary” programme of the ILP with the reformist programme of the Labour Party! The ILP objected to giving critical support to the Labour Party in those days because the Labour Party policy was one of support for imperialist war. Today, after the Labour Party has dirtied its banner a second time in support of the capitalists in war, the ILP gives them a clean bill of health as “socialists”. They prepare for the coming general election by rushing to get on the bandwagon of the Labour Party. Not that the Labour Party will cease to support imperialist wars – that would be too much to expect from the new found socialists – but after all, the attitude towards war is only a mere difference of opinion in the eyes of Brockway these days. The Labour Party inside or outside the government will continue either as a governing party or as a “loyal opposition” to support the blatantly imperialist war against Japan in order to aid the capitalists in getting back the loot and the slaves which the Japanese capitalists have grabbed from them.

Yet it is not so long ago that the leaders sought with might and main to differentiate themselves from what they described as the “doomed” Labour Party. During the first phase of the war, Brockway, Ridley, Padley and others vied with one another in predicting the collapse of the Labour Party. The ILP then developed the idea that the masses would by-pass the Labour Party, and come straight to the side of the proponents of the “Socialist Britain Now” campaign. Today, that campaign has been relegated to the limbo of centrist lost causes. It has been quietly buried without fuss or explanation. At the time of its inception, it was subjected to a Marxian criticism, and its inevitable demise was predicted in the columns of Workers’ International News and the Socialist Appeal.

The ultra-left notion, that because the Labour Party had betrayed the workers, all that was necessary was for them to hang out a signboard “Socialism Now”, received its crassest expression in the articles of the sectarian, Ridley. Let us see what he wrote because he gave a finished expression to all the mistakes of the ILP leadership; their inability to understand the problem of the Labour Party and how to face up to it. Criticising the Trotskyists who were demanding that the Labour leaders end the shameless coalition with the capitalists and wage a

struggle for power on a socialist programme, as a means of educating the workers through their own experience, Ridley gleefully jibed:

“In fact, everything indicates that this war will mark the end of the Labour Party just as the last one did that of its liberal predecessor, despite the valiant efforts of the Trotskyists, to revive the fast putrefying corpse. The spirit died in it long ago. After all, even Christ gave up the dead as hopeless after three days!” (New Leader, February 21 1942)

It might be pointed out that this is not the most foolish statement made by leaders of the ILP. Padley, Brockway and others all argued that to give support – critical support at that – to the Labour Party, and demand that they take power on a socialist programme, would be to deceive the workers and sow illusions in the Labour leaders who had betrayed the workers. If there was a grain of sense in their arguments of that time, it was that the reactionary reformists of the Labour Party could not fundamentally alter the conditions of the masses when in power. Now, they have thrown overboard the only correct part of their criticism, and have fallen into the very abyss which they claimed the Trotskyist policy would lead to. They now deceive the workers into believing that the Labour Party can accomplish the socialist revolution.

Thus, insofar as their policy can affect events, they smooth the path of reaction, both inside and outside the Labour Party.

Trotsky once wrote that a sectarian is merely an opportunist afraid of his own opportunism. We have seen what Ridley wrote in the past. Let us hear his words of wisdom today. In the New Leader of June 20 1945, Ridley writes:

“The Labour Party is the mass party of the British trade unions, and, in general, of the more politically conscious workers. It is also ‘His Majesty’s opposition’.

For which reasons it occupies an important contemporary role in British politics. It has this great advantage over the Tories that it still commands an extensive reserve of enthusiasm and moral idealism amongst its rank and file. Though it must be added that the present leadership of the party hasn't a glimmering of a notion as to what to do with this great potentially socialist and revolutionary force. This last fact was very obvious at the recent Labour Party conference, where not so much a gulf, as an abyss, divided the platform from the rank and file."

Not so much a gulf as an abyss separates the Ridley of 1945 from the Ridley of 1942. But let us go further:

"The question of the survival of the Labour Party, and the possibility of its continuing to play any role in the socialist transformation of British society depends upon whether the rank and file of the party can throw up a new leadership which adequately reflects, and will continue to reflect in or out of office, its point of view, free from the domination of the trade union bureaucracy. And this, in its turn depends on whether the Labour Party regards itself as a federal structure, including all socialist trends, revolutionary as well as reformist; or whether, as at present, as an intolerant monolithic top-heavy structure committed to endless compromises, and to the philosophy of a dead age, itself the product of extinct material conditions.

"The next general election may put the Labour Party in power. Then will come its supreme test, for 1945, unlike 1924 and 1929-31, is an age of revolution versus counter-revolution, and any British government (of whatever shade) must choose one or the other camps."

The miracle is achieved; Ridley has succeeded in bettering the accomplishments of Christ! Whereas Christ gave up hope for the dead after three days, Ridley has revived the stinking corpse after three years! Naturally, under such circumstances, the smell is overpowering.

Think of it. Ridley parades as a Marxian historian, and yet raises the question as to whether the Labour Party in power will support revolution or counter-revolution!

The Labour Party, as a party, will always act to defend the “democratic” counter-revolution against the proletarian revolution in a revolutionary situation. In power, the Labour Party, with or without a majority, would act as it did in 1924 and 1929. That there would be splits and revolts within the ranks, even at the top, inside and outside Parliament in such an event, is an entirely different question.

What would be the attitude of a genuine revolutionary party towards the problem of affiliation? In order to disguise its complete and unconditional surrender to the reformism of the Labour Party, the ILP leadership suggests that it will affiliate only after the truce has been broken and the coalition ended. Why? The Labour Party will still be the same Labour Party, except that with a fake “opposition” to the Tories, the leadership will be even more dangerous than before. It can allow itself the luxury of criticising the Tories, which can lead the rank and file to believe that the Labour Party leaders intend to wage a real struggle for socialism. But at the coming general election, the Labour Party will not, and cannot put a fighting socialist case, for fear it may gain a majority. And it fears that a majority would expose its incapacity to carry through any large scale measures against capitalism and in the interests of the working class. Nor is there any absolute certainty that the Labour Party may not enter another coalition after the election, although this is unlikely because of the pressure of the rank and file.

Would the ILP in that case, disaffiliate from the Labour Party? You would search in vain for an answer to this question from the pro-affiliationist wing of the ILP.



If the ILP were a genuine Marxist party, the problem would be approached from an entirely different standpoint. The Labour Party is the mass organisation of the working class. In order to win the workers to the banner of revolutionary socialism, it would facilitate matters if the revolutionaries had the right to put their point of view directly to the workers inside the Labour Party. If, given the right of criticism, affiliation would assist in educating the Labour Party workers. Under such circumstances, the rapid regroupment of the workers in the Labour Party around a revolutionary programme and banner would become a possibility. Fighting side by side in the ranks with the Labour workers, we would be in a better position to convince them of the necessity for a Marxist programme and the futility of reformism.

Thus the leftward swing of the workers would lead to a strengthening of the revolutionary tendencies within the Labour Party, without in any way sacrificing the principles for which we stand.

In approaching the Labour Party for affiliation all negotiations would be conducted publicly, in full-view of the workers, and the reasons for such a step honestly explained without in any way abandoning our revolutionary position, or our criticism and exposure of the Labour leaders. On these conditions, we would be prepared to affiliate, even if the Labour Party remained in the coalition.

Basically, our approach towards affiliation is no different than our approach to the problem of the Labour government. Affiliation would have tremendous advantages in the establishment of a closer bond with the rank and file Labour workers. If the Labour leaders refused to accept us, the workers would see them as the splitters, especially if previously we had waged a campaign on the issue in the factories and trade unions, and secured some support among the Labour workers.

However, in spite of the opportunist approach of the ILP leadership, the affiliation of the ILP to the Labour Party would be a progressive step. Some

comrades in the ILP oppose affiliation because they correctly see in the policy of the NAC, a capitulation to the reformist Labour leaders. But in opposing the false reformist approach of the NAC, they make mistakes of a sectarian character. Even if the ILP were a revolutionary party, affiliation would be progressive. But with the present position, affiliation should help enormously in clarifying the situation within the ILP and all the tendencies within it. There is no fundamental difference separating the Labour lefts from the ILP leaders. The differences between them are entirely artificial. There is no real political reason why they should not be together.

It is true, that the Labour leaders, or a large section of them, have their own reasons for desiring the affiliation of the ILP. They realise only too well that in the coming period those organisations which stood out against the war will become more attractive to the disillusioned workers and soldiers. In face of the coming upsurge of the workers, the Labour leaders will require a “left” cover in order to retain the support of the masses. In their calculations, the ILP will serve this purpose.

That was how the situation worked out after the last war, and they hope that history will repeat itself. However, the situation is entirely different today. The ILP will enter the Labour Party on the eve of a tremendous ferment and explosion among the masses. Far from the tranquil existence anticipated by the ILP leadership, the ILP would inevitably act as the crystallising point for the awakening Labour workers. Both the fresh recruits, and the older stratum of industrial members will demand a revolutionary policy. Thus the differentiation within the ILP would be intensified between the reformist wing and the revolutionary wing. The revolutionary wing, if it worked out a Marxist policy and programme, would enormously accelerate the revolutionary regroupment within the Labour movement.

Whether inside the Labour Party, or outside, the organic left-reformism or at best, centrism of the ILP leadership stands in the way of the ILP adopting a revolutionary position. Entry into the Labour Party will force them to show their

hand. The best members will come to see exactly where the leadership really stands. The new and virile members who will enter the Labour Party would fuse with the ILP left wing. True, the ILP would be flooded also by left parliamentarians, pacifists and careerists. But these would rapidly separate themselves from the ILP rank and file and become assimilated with the leadership, dragging it further to the right. This again, would have its effects on the rank and file.

On the background of tremendous storms on the industrial and political fields, both the Labour Party and the ILP will be shaken from top to bottom. Affiliation of the ILP to the Labour Party seems to be a foregone conclusion: but it will neither avail the reformist leadership of the Labour Party, nor the centrist leadership of the ILP. It will act as an accelerator of all the processes of change and movement taking place within both organisations. The revolutionary workers in both parties, in the course of their own experience will begin to perceive that only the programme and methods of Bolshevism, only the programme of the Fourth International can lead to the overthrow of the capitalist system and the victory of the socialist revolution.

# **CP Leaders want post-war coalition with the Tories**

**By Ted Grant**

[Socialist Appeal, Vol. 7 No. 4, Mid-April 1945]

The letter of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party on the Crimea conference dated February 21 1945 has aroused justified concern, apprehension and doubts among the rank and file members as to the correctness of the present, and above all the future, policy of the “Communist” Party leadership.

Nearly all class-conscious fighters in the ranks, who are worthy of their salt, regard with dismay the prospect of a continuation of the present party policy in the post-war period. And no wonder! The best fighters in the Communist Party were reconciled to the present policy of class collaboration because the leadership assured them that the struggle for socialism was only postponed till after the defeat of Hitler.

Now this statement of the Executive Committee has been issued on post-war policy, and it does not contain a single word about the struggle for socialism or the socialist revolution. On the contrary, the EC takes its stand, like Earl Browder and the American Communist Party, on the maintenance of capitalism and imperialism[45].

Comrades of the Communist Party, examine this statement and see what it really means.

The Crimea conference has been described as opening out a period of permanent peace:

“the pledge to so work as to remove the political, economic and social causes of war is of historic importance and significance, for to realise this would be to achieve an age-old dream of world humanity. The peoples want a lasting peace above all else in the world. They know that only through lasting peace can there be developed any real opportunities for establishing forms of international co-operation that will help in the speedy restoration of devastated Europe, meet the urgent needs of the peoples and help forward the backward colonial countries. Only through lasting peace can humanity forge ahead to new social victories over poverty, unemployment and insecurity and guarantee the same united use of the world’s productive forces in peacetime as has taken place during the war.”

This, at a time when the capitalists are preparing, in the midst of the bloodiest slaughter of the peoples, for a new world war.

Marx and Lenin never failed to explain that the only way in which the “political, economic and social causes of war” could be eliminated, was through the socialist revolution, and only by the socialist revolution. Lenin never tired of castigating those who argued that peace was possible under capitalism – especially in the age of imperialism.

Lenin showed, what should be elementary even to utopian socialists not claiming to be Marxist, that war was caused by the fundamental contradictions of capitalism through the struggle for markets, raw materials, colonies and strategic bases in preparation for new wars. That was the cause of this world war, as of the last. Far from the contradictions of capitalism being solved, or even reduced by the war or temporary agreement at Yalta, they have been aggravated and increased a hundred-fold by the war itself. The crisis of capitalism cannot be

solved by paper agreements.

What are the pledges of perjured capitalist politicians worth in the face of stern reality? To unite fire and water would be far simpler than to gain peace and prosperity under capitalism. Pollitt and the other leaders know this only too well. This is not a complicated question, but the ABC of Marxism. How many times did Lenin sternly attack the lies and illusions of the social democrats, who after the last war put forward a policy of support for the League of Nations and “democracy” as a means of achieving peace and progress? The only difference between then and now is that the Communist Party policy is even more reactionary and utopian. The social democrats never dared to say what the CP leaders are saying today; at least they paid lip service to socialism.

The last world war ushered in a period of revolutionary storms and imperialist catastrophes. The decay of capitalism was reflected in hunger, unemployment, fascism and war. The consequences of this world war will be far worse. The period before us is one of permanent wars and revolutions.

Peace – let alone permanent peace – is impossible while capitalism continues. With the further decay of capitalism the so-called “peace” will be nothing less than an armed truce and the preparation for new and more terrible wars.

Under the heading Alternative to Crimea the letter paints a black picture if the policy of “Crimea” is not carried out:

“The emergence of new forms of reaction in Europe and Britain. Delay in recovery in Europe. No effective forms of international economic co-operation, because where there is an unstable peace, and serious social unrest, there can be no long-term planning to utilise the world’s resources in the interests of the peoples of the world. Political instability in Britain, and its effects at home and

abroad.

“This is why we shall fight with all our strength for the carrying out of the policy of the Crimea conference. This is why we shall fight against all remnants of sectarianism both in our own Party and the labour movement.”

In answering these statements of Pollitt and the CP leaders, we are compelled to argue the most elementary socialist propositions. These should be axiomatic for anyone claiming the most superficial knowledge of Marxism. Pollitt’s arguments are no better than the demagoguery of the Tories that capitalism is alright, but a few “bad men” are the cause of all the trouble. We are compelled to discuss, not communist tactics, but whether capitalism is progressive or not!

The capitalists are fond of shouting about equality of sacrifice and the united endeavours of the whole population in the war. Every class conscious member of the Communist Party knows what a hollow lie this is. What “united use of the world’s productive resources” has taken place during the war? The bosses have grown richer while the workers have made all the sacrifices. The “united use” of productive resources benefited only the capitalists and not the working class. The “unity” was a unity of horse and rider – the capitalists riding on the backs of the workers.

Yet the CP faithfully echoes this capitalist propaganda.

And if capitalism could not prevent war, far less can it abolish poverty, insecurity and unemployment. On the contrary, the ruling class of Britain and America are preparing for unprecedented unemployment in the years following the war – 5 to 7 millions in Britain, 20 to 30 millions in America are their estimates. If capitalism could accomplish what Pollitt & Co. claim for it, then the whole basis of the teachings of Marx and Lenin is false.

The capitalists themselves have no such illusions as are put forward by the leaders of the CP. "By their deeds shall ye know them" is the only sure method by which the workers can arrive at correct conclusions. The capitalists have already commenced their attacks upon the workers' conditions under the guise of "redundancy." No real attempt has been made to solve the housing problem or any other of the serious and urgent problems confronting the workers. Here we see the real plans of capitalism.

The next section of the document dealing with the position in Britain is an indictment of the cynicism by which the leaders are endeavouring to deceive their own members and the working class.

"No country in the world needs the adoption of the Crimea policy more than Britain. Its six years of war and all that this has meant, its backward economy in comparison, for example, to that of America, carry with them most serious consequences if we are to enter into post-war struggle for markets with America and other countries. Consider the terrible prospects of attacks on wages, mass unemployment, curtailment of social services, and the grim future that would face the British people as a consequence of such a policy. This can be avoided only if the Crimea policy is carried through."

As if the race for markets has not already begun! As if America has not already stripped Britain of her investments abroad! As if the phrases of the Crimea conference are not intended to conceal the real situation and the aims of the victorious imperialists.

America has announced her programme of trebling her pre-war exports. Britain is trying to double hers. The competition between Britain and America will be far greater than the competition between Britain and Germany which led to the present war. To ask that the competition should cease is to behave like King



Canute and demand that the tide should recede at command[46].

But now the CP leaders are demanding that the labour movement should continue “national unity” and the coalition in the post-war period. They talk of “the new conception of democracy that has grown up with the grim experiences in fighting fascism” – the experience of the Greeks at the hands of Churchill and the ruling class perhaps?

The real position of the CP is best indicated by their pretence that the Tories have changed their policy:

“It [Crimea – EG] represents a victory for the anti-fascist forces over the pro-fascist policy which hitherto dominated the Tory Party, revealed in the leading role adopted by Churchill and Eden, as the two present dominating personalities in the Tory Party in the whole course of the war against fascism.”

Churchill, the implacable enemy of the working class; Churchill who supported Franco, Mussolini and Hitler; Churchill who bared his fangs in Greece; Churchill who has always been a die-hard supporter of big business – is presented as a “progressive”. In Greece with the fatal policy of supporting “progressive” capitalists, the Greek and British CPs called for Damaskinos to be made regent. The British imperialists obliged them, and almost immediately afterwards Damaskinos publicly attacked the Greek CP and has been a bulwark of reaction ever since his appointment.

In Britain the CP supported Grigg as a “progressive” in the Cardiff by-election. This was followed by the same people shouting “Grigg must go!” As Grigg is a supporter of Churchill and the Crimea policy of British imperialism, presumably the slogan should be altered to “Grigg must stay!”

To support Churchill is to support monopoly capitalism. To support the capitalists, the interests of the working class must be betrayed. It has taken the advanced British workers the experience of 50 years to realise that the Liberal and Tory Parties are parties of capitalism. From many bitter lessons they have learned the necessity for the independent struggle of the masses for socialism. Now, in preparation for the greatest crisis of British capitalism in the whole of its existence, the Communist Party wishes to put the clock back in cringing capitulation to British imperialism.

Shamefacedly, the CP leaders dare not say openly and unequivocally to the workers that they want an agreement with the Tory and the Liberal capitalists; they try to cover up by the innocuous formula: "Labour and progressive government."

The laws of capitalist development, given a capitalist basis, can no more be circumvented than the law of gravitation. But the role of the CP is to act like a bell-wether leading the sheep to destruction.

The quotation from Harry Pollitt's *How to win the peace* reproduced in the letter is an indication of this:

"After the war the whole nation must unite against reactionary sections of capitalism who, for whatever motives, oppose the use of the nation's resources to meet the nation's needs. The people who have been strong enough to defeat Hitler will always be strong enough to defeat those who are prepared to go back to the old sterile policy of wage cuts, victimization and unemployment; those who organise scarcity because they profit from it; those who are willing to plunge the nations back into the turmoil and menace of imperialist rivalries and war."

No matter how they may try to disguise it, the CP leaders want a government in which Churchill, Eden and other reactionary Tories will play a prominent part. Their description of a “progressive” is one who supports Churchill and Eden. The only difference between the present government and the government they want, is one of a reshuffling of posts!

The leaders of the CP are too cowardly to declare this openly because of the disgust it would arouse within the ranks of the working class.

“Collaboration” between bosses and workers has nothing in common with a communist policy. All his life Lenin taught that the interests of the workers and the interests of the capitalists were fundamentally opposed. Lenin castigated the treachery of the reformists in entering capitalist cabinets with plans for reforms, which, he said, remained plans on paper only. In Revolution of 1917, Lenin wrote:

“What empty phrases these: ‘There is no place in the government of democratic Russia (the popular front government of Kerensky) for a champion of interests of international capital!’ Is it not a shame that educated people should write such piffle?”

“The entire provisional government (of Liberals and labour leaders) is a government of the capitalist class. The main thing is the class, not the individual. To attack Milyukov [Liberal leader – EG] personally, to demand, directly or indirectly, his dismissal – is silly, for no removal of individuals will change anything, until different classes are put in power.

“It is pardonable for ignorant peasants to exact from the capitalist ‘promises’ to

‘live righteously’ and not capitalistically; to demand that the capitalists cease ‘championing the interests of capital’. But for the leaders... to adopt such methods, means to nourish the illusory hopes placed by the people in the capitalists, hopes that are most harmful and ruinous to the cause of freedom, to the cause of the Revolution.”[47]

Then again:

“To hope that the capitalist class would ‘mend its ways’, would cease being a capitalist class, would give up its profits, is a fatuous hope, an empty dream, and in practice a deception of the people.”[48]

Never in the whole history of the working class has the ground been so favourable for a bold and decisive lead. All over Europe, all over the world, the working class is showing its desire to change the system which is responsible for the miseries of the war, for unemployment and insecurity, for fascism and reaction. The letter proudly claims:

“The communist parties, the world war over, are in a stronger position than ever before with many leading communists in positions of responsibility in European governments.”

The workers in great numbers have swung over from reformism to what they believe is communism in the shape of the Stalinist communist parties. But instead of giving a revolutionary communist lead, the CP leadership in all countries, including Britain, is pursuing a policy to the right of the old reformist organisations.

Comrades: remember the results of the Labour governments of 1924, and 1929-31 when they depended on Liberal toleration. Not a single major measure in the interests of the workers was carried out. And the CP now proposes that coalition not only with the Liberals, but with the Tories, can serve the interests of the working class.

In 1924 and 1929, the British Communist Party, still echoing some of the teachings of Lenin, correctly pointed out that even a majority Labour government could not carry out a programme in the interests of the working class. In order to educate the workers, Lenin taught us, it was necessary to advocate the pushing into power of the Labour Party, as the best means of convincing the rank and file Labour workers, through their own experience, of the futility of even a majority reformist government. But while advocating that Labour should take power independently of the capitalist parties, Lenin warned the communists against sowing any illusions among the workers that their problems could be solved, or the capitalist class threatened in any way, by their reformist leadership. Our party has consistently carried out Lenin's policy of warning the workers that they can rely only on their own forces, their own organisations, their own solidarity and strength against their class enemies, to achieve their emancipation. We repeat: only by taking power into the hands of the working class and expropriating the capitalist class, will peace and plenty come to the workers of Britain and the world. This is the policy of Bolshevism.

We can help the workers of Europe, we can help the Soviet Union, we can serve the interests of the British workers, only by waging an uncompromising struggle against British capitalism, only by fighting for a socialist Britain.

We appeal to all those members of the Communist Party who wish to remain true to their class, to study the teachings of Marx and Lenin. Compare their teachings with the teachings of the Communist Party. We are confident that you can only arrive at one conclusion: the policy of the Communist Party is entirely opposed to the interests of the workers of the world; it has nothing in common with communism. Our policy is the policy of Marx and Lenin, the policy of real

revolutionary communism.

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## Notes

[\[1\] The Civil Authorities Act \(commonly known as “Special Powers Act”\) was introduced in Northern Ireland in 1922, establishing among other measures the internment without trial.](#)

[\[2\] The Beveridge Report was issued by the Inter-Departmental Committee on Social Insurance and Allied Services set up by the British government in June 1941 under the guidance of William Beveridge. The report, which outlined the bulk of what would become the post-war policy of reforms carried out by the Labour government, was published in December 1942 raising huge expectations among the working class. Parliamentary debate, however, showed that the application of these policies was to be postponed to an indefinite future by Churchill and the Tories.](#)

[\[3\] James Ramsay MacDonald \(1866 – 1937\) was the first ever British Labour Prime Minister in 1924. In 1929 he led the second Labour government, but was expelled from the party when he formed a “national government” supported by a Tory majority in 1931. His betrayal provoked deep anger in the ranks of the labour movement.](#)

[\[4\] A means test is an assessment of family income that determines whether an individual or family is eligible for help from the government. In the early 1930s](#)

the abolition of the Means Test became one of the main demands of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement in Britain. Widespread protests culminated in the National Hunger March of September–October 1932. The marchers were received in London on October 27 1932 by a mass rally of 100,000 in Hyde Park. The rally was repressed and dispersed by force through the deployment of 70,000 policemen, triggering serious violence and several days of rioting in the capital.

[5] The term quisling, meaning a traitor who aids an occupying enemy force, became of common use after the infamous coup d'état in Norway by Vidkun Quisling on the back of the Nazi invasion of the country on April 9 1940.

[6] The Independent Labour Party (ILP) was established in 1893. Its Jubilee conference was held in Bradford in April 24-26 1943.

[7] National Administrative Council, the Independent Labour Party's central body.

[8] For a criticism of the "Socialist Britain Now" policy of the ILP see An open letter to ILP national conference, Ted Grant, Writings, Volume 1, p. 215.

[9] Marc Loris was one of the many pen-names adopted by Jean van Heijenoort (1912–1986). For several years secretary and bodyguard of Trotsky during his exile in France, Norway and later in Mexico, he moved to the USA at the end of 1939 where he became a member of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International.

[10] George Buchanan (1890–1955) was a Scottish pattern maker, vice-chairman of Glasgow Trades Council. At the 1922 general election he was elected to the House of Commons from Glasgow Gorbals. He was one of the most prominent ILP leaders supporting the 1932 decision to break with the LP but decided to leave the ILP to rejoin Labour in 1939. After the LP victory in 1945 he was appointed to government posts by Prime Minister Attlee.

[11] James Maxton (1885–1946). A firm opponent of the First World War and conscientious objector, he was elected to the National Council of the LP in 1918. Later he was identified as the most prominent leader of the Independent Labour Party of which he was chairman from 1926 to 1931, and from 1934 to 1939. MP for Glasgow Bridgeton since 1922, he retained the seat until his death in 1946. His skills as an orator were recognised even by opponents such as Churchill who acknowledged him as one of the most talented MPs.

[12] John McNair (1887–1968) was ILP representative in Barcelona at the time of the Spanish civil war and general secretary of the ILP from 1939 until 1955.

[13] Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification). Founded in 1935 by the fusion of the Trotskyist Communist Left of Spain (led by Nin) and the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (led by Maurin). The POUM acted in political solidarity with the British ILP. After the Barcelona May days, which culminated in armed conflict between the revolutionary wing and the Stalinists, the POUM was banned by the government under pressure from the Stalinists on June 16 1937, on false accusation of collaborating with the enemy. Its leaders were arrested and the leader of the party Andreu Nin was murdered by the Stalinists.



[14] The arrest of the two Polish-Jewish socialists by the NKVD in 1941 was met by a wave of protests amongst socialists in the West. They were executed on Stalin's orders at the end of 1942.

[15] The Common Wealth was founded in 1942 and met some success in putting forward independent candidates in by-elections against the national government supported by all the main parties. Its programme and socialist orientation appealed to the egalitarian sentiment of dissatisfied Labour voters.

[16] Two ILP leading members visited Moscow in May 1920 and entered into discussions with Lenin, Radek and other leaders of the Communist International. Their report was published subsequently in a booklet by the ILP, along with the position taken by the EC of the Communist International.

[17] The Trade Disputes Act was introduced in 1927 as a reaction against the 1926 general strike. Secondary action and any strike whose purpose was to coerce the government directly or indirectly were declared unlawful. Incitement to participate in an unlawful strike was made a criminal offence, punishable by imprisonment for up to two years and the assets and funds of unions involved in such strikes could be seized by the state. Section 3 declared unlawful mass picketing. Section 5 forbade civil service unions from affiliation to the TUC. The Act was eventually repealed by the Labour government in 1946 but some of its main features were reintroduced by Thatcher in 1980.

[18] Aunt Sally is a British traditional throwing game. The term is used metaphorically to mean something that is a deliberately easy target for criticism.

[19] Vansittartism (named after British diplomat Robert Vansittart) is the doctrine that the German people are innately belligerent.

[20] Speaking on a visit to Rome on January 20 1927, Churchill praised Mussolini: “I could not help being charmed, like so many other people have been, by Signor Mussolini’s gentle and simple bearing and by his calm, detached poise in spite of so many burdens and dangers. Secondly, anyone could see that he thought of nothing but the lasting good, as he understood it, of the Italian people, and that no lesser interest was of the slightest consequence to him. If I had been an Italian I am sure that I should have been whole-heartedly with you from the start to finish in your triumphant struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism. I will, however, say a word on an international aspect of fascism. Externally, your movement has rendered service to the whole world. The great fear which has always beset every democratic leader or a working class leader has been that of being undermined by someone more extreme than he. Italy has shown that there is a way of fighting the subversive forces which can rally the masses of the people, properly led, to value and wish to defend the honour and stability of civilised society. She has provided the necessary antidote to the Russian poison. Hereafter no great nation will be unprovided with an ultimate means of protection against the cancerous growth of Bolshevism.”

[21] In the struggle of China against Japanese imperialism, the British backed Japan. Secretary of State for India L. S. Amery said on February 27 1933 in the House of Commons: “I confess that I see no reason whatever why, either in act or in word, or in sympathy, we should go individually or intentionally against Japan in this matter. Japan has got a very powerful case based upon fundamental realities... Who is there among us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese nationalism? Our whole policy in India, our whole policy in Egypt, stand condemned if we condemn Japan.”

[22] Wladyslaw Sikorski, a Polish nationalist and collaborator of the Pilsudski regime, was made by the Allies prime minister of the Polish government in exile during the Second World War. General de Gaulle was an anti-socialist but opposed French capitulation to Nazi Germany and became leader of the Free French Forces against the Vichy regime and the Nazi occupation. Generals Giraud and Darlan defected the top brass of the military loyal to the Vichy regime and took sides with the Allies. They both assumed important posts in the pro-Allied French army in Africa.

[23] In August 1931, the Nazi Party launched a referendum to overthrow the Social Democratic government of Prussia. At first the German CP correctly attacked it. Then, three weeks before the vote, under orders from Stalin, they joined forces with the Nazis to bring down the main enemy, the social-democrats. They changed the name of the plebiscite to a “Red Referendum” and referred to the Nazi and the members of the SA as “working people’s comrades”.

[24] The Committee of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties (widely known simply as London Bureau and nicknamed the “3 ½ International”) was formed in 1932 by groupings and parties breaking political solidarity with the Second International and evolving towards a revolutionary position from reformism. These centrist organisations were initially moving towards the positions of Trotsky and the International Left Opposition but were unable to accept Marxism as their ideological base and vacilated between reformist and revolutionary policies. Towards the end of the Second World War, after an haemorrhage of members towards reformism, Stalinism and the Fourth International, most of these parties and groups had relapsed into reformism and re-joined their original milieu.

[25] Group led by Jay Lovestone, a leading figure in the early US Communist

Party. After Lenin's death, he sided with Bukharin and Stalin and supported the purge of Trotskyists from the party, but was subsequently removed from the post of party secretary for his Bukharinist views and expelled in 1929. The group that gathered around him joined the pro-Bukharin International Communist Opposition which entered the London Bureau in 1938. The US group dissolved in 1941. An advocate of US entry in the Second World War, Lovestone turned anti-communist and became a CIA agent within the American Federation of Labor.

[26] Leon Trotsky, Stalinism and Bolshevism, August 1937.

[27] The Socialist Party of Great Britain was founded in 1904 as a split from the Social Democratic Federation (SDF). It was formed to oppose the SDF's reformism, but did so on the basis of rejecting the struggle for partial goals and promotes only socialism as an immediate goal. On this ground it opposed the national liberation struggle as a waste of working class lives which leaves capitalism intact. Because of its policies the SPGB has never reached significant influence and has maintained throughout its existence the character of a sect.

[28] Leon Trotsky, Once again, whither France?, March 28 1935.

[29] The battle of the Somme was fought from July to November 1916 between the British, French and allied armies versus the German army on either side of the river Somme in Picardy, France. This battle alone claimed more than 300,000 lives and 1 million casualties from both sides. The battle for the conquest of the Belgian village of Passchendaele was fought in October 1917 as part of the Flanders campaign with tens of thousands of soldiers killed on both sides.

[30] The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), founded in 1943.

[31] The Campbell Case of 1924 involved charges against the editor of the British Communist newspaper Workers Weekly for “incitement to mutiny”. Prosecution was suspended by decision of then Labour prime minister Ramsay MacDonald. In October 1925 the Communist Party was prosecuted again under the Mutiny Act. Twelve leading figures of the CP, including the same J. R. Campbell were convicted to sentences varying from 6 to 12 months in prison.

[32] Defence Regulation 1AA, introduced on April 17 1944 by Labour minister Bevin, made it an offence to “instigate or incite any other person to take part in, or otherwise act in furtherance of, any stoppage among persons engaged in the performance of essential services.” Penalties included a maximum of 5 years prison sentence or a £500 fine. At the same time, Defence Regulation 1A was amended to make peaceful picketing illegal.

[33] It refers to Defence Regulations 2D, concerning the suppression of newspapers that publish articles detrimental to the war effort, and 18B, concerning the imprisonment of individuals considered a threat to the war effort.

[34] The CP organ Daily Worker was suppressed by the wartime coalition’s (Labour) Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, between January 21 1941 and September 7 1942.

[35] Facing shortage of skilled miners (after many of the workers in the mines had been conscripted into the armed forces) the national government introduced through Labour minister Ernest Bevin (not to be confused with Aneurin Bevan, the left-wing Labour MP) a hugely unpopular scheme under which around 50,000 young men were conscripted to work down the mines by the arbitrary expedient of pulling their National Service registration numbers out of a ballot. These men, known as the “Bevin Boys”, were not trained for the conditions to be faced in the mines and were not given the status of being part of the armed forces. Bevin Boys included many apprentices who, losing the continuity of their apprenticeship, thereby lost the chance to pursue a skilled trade.

[36] Commissioned during the Second World War, in January 1941 the “Expert Committee on Compensation and Betterment”, chaired by Mr Justice Uthwatt, reported in September 1942. The report laid down some of the guidelines implemented in 1947 for the post war reconstruction town and country planning system.

[37] This article was also republished as a pamphlet under the title: TUC helps Hitler.

[38] Leon Trotsky, For a workers’ united front against fascism, December 1931.

[39] In order to avoid the substitution of skilled labour (with higher wages) with apprentices or unskilled labour, it was a common practice in the trade union movement to force the employers to accept Dilution Agreements which established the priority of craftsmen on “dilutees” when trade was slack.

[40] Philipp Scheidemann was one of the main leaders of the German SPD. In 1919 he became the second Chancellor of the Weimar Republic. Gustav Noske, also a leading social democrat, played a prominent role in the bloody suppression of the Spartacist uprising of 1919, allowing and encouraging the organisation of the nationalist Freikorps (which were held responsible for the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht) and their active collaboration with the army.

[41] The traditionally acknowledged farther extremities of the island of Great Britain (Land's End in Western Cornwall and John O'Groats in mainland Scotland).

[42] On May 10 1920 the dockers of London refused to load arms and ammunition onto the Jolly George in opposition to the decision by the government to intervene militarily against the Russian revolution.

[43] Winston Churchill was appointed prime minister on May 10 1940 following the resignation of Neville Chamberlain. The previous general election were held in 1935.

[44] Set up in 1924 the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) was an organisation responsible for the issuing of gas masks, building air-raid shelters, up-keeping of local public shelters, and the enforcement through patrols of the blackout.

[45] Earl Bowder was the general secretary of the US Communist Party from 1930 to 1945. He zealously adhered at all the sharp turns impressed by Stalin to the Comintern's policy. Sentenced to 4 years imprisonment in 1940 he was liberated soon afterwards by the Roosevelt administration after the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, to please the new ally. Bowder became the most enthusiastic supporter of the US war effort, advocating a peaceful coexistence of the capitalist world with the USSR. At the beginning of 1944 his proposal to dissolve the CP into a "communist political association" was passed unanimously, a position which was later harshly criticised as liquidationist once the US-Soviet alliance fell apart in the post-war period.

[46] Cnut the Great (Canute) was a Danish king who reigned over England, Denmark, Sweden and Norway between 1018 and 1035. He was said to once have placed his throne by the sea and commanded the tide to stop in order to show the limitations of his power in front of god and nature.

[47] Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 196-7.

[48] Ibid., p. 204.



### **3. British Trotskyism and the Fourth International**

## Correspondence May - November 1942

**Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, May 20 1942

Dear Jimmy,

We note in the New Leader report of the Manchester conference of the Socialist Britain campaign that our delegates voted for the resolution. If this is so, it is a political error as we cannot take responsibility for the centrist, really reformist, programme of the ILP. Please let us have full details of what really took place.

The initiative of the comrades in covering Gresford with the SAs [Socialist Appeals] is very good. We suggest, if you have not already done so, that you cover the Kirby ROFs[1] with the present issue, as you are bound to make good sales and contacts with it.

The Hyde Park meeting was a big success. A crowd of 400 to 500 listened attentively and enthusiastically to our case. The few Stalinist hecklers were silenced by the crowd themselves, and altogether our reception was all that could be desired.

We have sent our contacts' addresses in Rugby to the name and address given by

you. We note from the minutes that you are approaching Changer and IP for their position on membership once again. This would be a mistake. They have shown themselves in the past as elements which could not be assimilated to our organisation. We want to turn our backs on the old outworn elements and concentrate on the fresh elements as you are already doing. If elements such as these approach us for membership and prove by their work that they are serious, that would be a different question. Otherwise we should leave them severely alone.

Before taking young Cund out of the ILP you should discuss the question with the centre when you come up to London. He may be able to do something in the Lancashire Federation. But before a decision is taken it will be necessary to consider the question carefully.

The Cannon pamphlet is already sold out but the reprint will be ready in a fortnight and we will let you have some as soon as they are ready. We have no knowledge of Mc D. in Manchester but if he takes a couple of dozens of Appeals he should be worth looking up. The contact in Barnoldswick is sympathetic to us, is a member of the ILP, and distributes a few SAs. G. of Burnley is supposed to be attending to him. Unfortunately we have not heard from G. for some time. Jock has written but up to the present we have heard nothing.

The position in relation to the RSL prior to C.'s visit you are more or less acquainted with. Our stand has been confirmed by events. The report sent out from the centre should cover this. But at any rate we expect to make big gains (i.e. all that is worthwhile) from the RSL in the near future.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant (Secretary)

PS: The national conference will probably be held in August or the late autumn. We will send all details to you later.

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## **E.C. Clapper to the RSL**

June 21 1942

To the RSL

Dear friends:

In our opinion, your attitude towards the WIL is utterly false. Without ignoring personal difficulties inherited from the past, it is necessary to recognise that your false attitude flows directly from a false political appreciation of this group. You see in it a centrist group “moving away from us.” That is an opinion which we can by no means share. The last document we have from you on this question is that entitled Our political estimation of the WIL and dated March 29 1942. Each one of your arguments has been unable to convince us.

### **The internal regime**

We are a little astonished to see that your first criticism of the WIL is its present regime. We do not know the organisation at first hand. Of course, it is your right to have a poor opinion of its internal functioning. Because of your suspicions

(well-grounded or not, we aren't discussing this point at the moment), you have the right to demand rigorous rules for common negotiations, you can also ask serious guarantees for the functioning of the future unified organisation. All this is your full right. But to invoke past or present mistakes in the internal regime in order to refuse any common discussion is inadmissible. Further, you present this point as a "difference of principle", as a "fundamental difference." But your document soon informs us that this "difference of principle" is founded upon the report of a few members who have left the WIL or who have been expelled from it. Naturally, we do not doubt the honesty of these comrades. But don't you think that all this is a rather narrow basis for establishing "principles"? We permit ourselves to remind you also that some documents of your last national conference (1941) show that the internal functioning of your own organisation was extremely chaotic during a certain period. Now, the question of the internal regime is the first point of your "political estimation" of the WIL. Don't you think that the outside observer could believe that you are just looking for poor reasons to justify an erroneous political judgement?

## **Attitude towards the war**

Your accusation against the WIL in this realm comprise three points:

A certain number of doubtful expressions in WIL's publications which indicate that the group abandons defeatism to pass into the defencist camp;

The use in the past, when there existed the danger of invasion, of the slogan "Arming the workers under workers' control";

The present use of the slogan "Nationalise the war industries under workers' control."

Let us examine each of these complaints successively.

You give in your document (pages 2 and 3) some quotations from the WIL's publications and in them you discover "defencism" and "opportunism". All this criticism is not only incorrect, but even unfair. Thus you give a quotation from the WIL's paper:

"Why did French imperialism take the road to defeat? Because to mobilise the workers to victory would have meant to arm the men who, only four years ago, rocked the capitalist state to its foundations in the great strike of June 1936. It would have been a risk that the government dare not take."

And you add this commentary:

"From this we learn two things. One, that the WIL believes the French working class had it been 'mobilised for victory' by the French bourgeoisie (i.e. furnished with arms) and had no anti-working class repressions taken place, would have supported the war and would have vigorously resisted the German invasion. And this, let it be noted, within the framework of the French imperialist state. Two, that the WIL would have supported such action on the part of the French working class."

The last sentence is absolutely inexact. You did not "learn" this from the quotation because it is not in it. Not only does the quotation not speak of "support", but it doesn't even say that such a situation could have materialised. Rather, it tries to prove the contrary. In order to get the spirit of the article, it suffices to cite the conclusion:

"Only the working class, organised independently of the bosses, can defeat the offensive Hitler must launch, and, at the same time, prevent a repetition of the

French disaster on British soil. Only in this manner can the whole forces of the country be mobilised... But this means that the workers must organise consciously for the capture of power. Let the socialist revolution be our answer to Hitler!”

This is a fundamentally revolutionary conclusion.

Your whole method consists in taking a phrase, tearing it from the context and showing that it might permit an opportunist interpretation, even if this interpretation is contrary to the meaning of the whole article. Naturally, by searching through a year or two of the publications of a political organisation, you can find half a dozen of such phrases and with them you triumphantly erect a “defencist” and “opportunist” line! But that has nothing in common with Marxist criticism.

We are going to try to show you the flaw in your method by an example. Lenin’s expression that defeat is the “lesser evil” is often repeated (if it is well understood is another question). Let us take the complete quotation from Lenin: “There can be absolutely no doubt that the lesser evil would be now and immediately the defeat of Tsarism in the present war. For Tsarism is a hundred times worse than Kaiserism.” That quotation, taken alone, could be interpreted as justifying the defeatist policy in Russia by the comparison of political regimes. Accordingly, it would lead to the support of the present war on the side of the democracies, for there is a still greater difference between fascism and bourgeois democracy than between Tsarism and Kaiserism. Hence, etc, etc... Naturally, this whole method is false, but it is precisely this method that you employ towards the WIL. And, as we have already said, it is not only false, but unfair.

With the question of the slogan “arming the workers” we arrive at the first serious difference. Your principal argument against the slogan is that “British imperialism proved very well able to protect itself against invasion.” Thus, you

have been right against the WIL thanks to... Hitler, who has not tried invasion. But your approach to the problem is incorrect for it forgets only one little thing: the state of mind of the masses. In August 1940 the invasion was a possibility (even a quasi-certainty in the consciousness of the masses). The masses had also seen the attitude of the bourgeoisie in a dozen countries (above all in France!). How to answer the question which tormented them? We have always insisted in our propaganda that while pretending to defend the nation, the bourgeoisie in reality defends its privileged position inside the nation. This is even the basis of the revolutionary policy towards the war. The slogan "arming the workers" introduces precisely a wedge between the bourgeoisie and the masses. It reveals to all the hypocrisy of "national defence": in the hour of the greatest danger the bourgeoisie refuses to trust its own people, preferring a bargain with the "enemy" bourgeoisie. What an excellent means of agitation! Matters have not proceeded to such a point in England, but they might have reached that point and for a certain period the slogan had a deeply offensive character against the British bourgeoisie.

To all this you reply: "it is revolutionary to call upon the workers to seize power. But to call upon the workers to seize power as the WIL did, as the only way of 'preventing a repetition of the French disaster on British soil' is not revolutionary; it is chauvinism." This quotation would indicate that you do not understand what chauvinism is, i.e. unity with the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary interests of the proletariat. How can "to call the workers to seize power", be "chauvinism", whatever the purpose may be?

Of course, these few considerations do not exhaust the problem. Perhaps there were some insufficiently clear formulae in the WIL's propaganda; we are not closely enough acquainted with the state of mind of the English workers to measure the practical value of the slogan, etc., etc. But what we wanted to show is that the slogan, far from being "defencism" is fully compatible with our principles.

The last point of your criticism of the WIL in the question of the war is your



condemnation of the present use of the slogan: “Nationalise the war industries under workers’ control!” We are obliged to say that we cannot share this opinion at all. Your argument against the slogan goes like this. At present, the nationalisation is not a “class demand”. The workers “wish for increased production in support of the imperialist war.” Consequently, the slogan “helps to maintain their chauvinism.”

All this reasoning is made up of abstract rationalism, but not of revolutionary realism. The workers convince themselves of the imperialist character of the war through different ways. The major one is the fact that even during the war the capitalists do not cease to be capitalists and heap up huge profits. The profit system, with its accumulation of riches and poverty during the war itself, clearly reveals the hypocrisy of “national defence”. On abstraction, a capitalism without private profit during the war would be much stronger to wage war. In reality the struggle against the profit system breaks the “civil peace” and leads to revolutionary actions against the bourgeoisie. And to give a perspective to this struggle, the slogan of “nationalisation under workers’ control” is one of the best.

Of course, at the beginning, many may support the slogan for patriotic reasons, for better prosecution of the war. But this is true for every slogan during the war. You write: at present, “the class issues, around which the worker struggles, are simple and elementary in character. They centre around wages, income tax, hours and conditions, and must inevitably assume acute forms as the war forces the bourgeoisie to impose increasing burdens upon the workers.” But even this struggle may be supported for patriotic reasons. A patriotic trade union leader may very well ask for a better repartition of the income tax, for wage increases, etc., in the interests of the prosecution of the war. All the arguments you raise against the slogan of nationalisation may be raised against the objectives you ascribe to the present struggle.

## **The problem of the Labour Party**

The discussion gravitates around two points which must be strictly separated. The first is the slogan “Labour to power”; the second is the fraction work in the Labour Party.

As it appears to us, the two groups are for the slogan “Labour to power”, but with different formulations. The RSL demands a “Third Labour government”, which is the most unfortunate formula that one could imagine. It immediately indicates a continuity with the lamentable experience of the past, instead of mobilising the workers for the rupture with the bourgeoisie on the basis of a series of transitional demands. For the moment we see no serious difference between the two groups on this question. The RSL’s formula seems to us a simple mistake which must be quickly corrected.

Now, on the question of work in the Labour Party, we can only recall our general position on this problem. We are unacquainted not only with the recent documents, but even with the exact organisational situation of the two groups. Moreover, it is necessary to keep in mind such factors as the war, the internal life of the Labour Party, etc. For a long time, the temporary sojourn of revolutionaries in a centrist or reformist party has not been a question of principle, but of simple tactic for the building of the revolutionary party. We think it is by all means necessary to carry on systematic work inside the Labour Party. But under the present conditions a means of unhampered independent expression is also indispensable. These two forms of political activity should be coordinated, not one set against the other.

## **Conclusion**

As well as we can judge by your documents, you are extremely provoked [annoyed] with the WIL, above all about the question of international affiliation.

We would not say that the WIL is completely sinless in this matter. But it must be clearly seen that you have your share of responsibility for the difficult present situation because of your completely negative attitude.

The impression of the WIL's leadership that we have here is that these are young comrades. If we could desire, at times, a little more firmness in their propaganda, we must recognise that they learn quickly. The last issue of their paper (that of May, with the article on the "second front") is excellent, and to speak of "centrism", "defencism", "chauvinism", etc., is simply false. It is necessary to say clearly: the WIL stands entirely on the ground of the principles and methods of the FI [Fourth International] and it should find its place in our ranks as soon as possible.

In England as elsewhere, we have the perspective of profound commotions in the next period. We must know how to prepare for them. The first step in this direction is a serious understanding with the WIL. Much precious time has already been lost. We hope you give serious consideration to these remarks and inform us of your opinion.

Yours fraternally,

E.C. Clapper

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**Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, July 9 1942

Dear Jimmie,

Just a note to advise you to go to Belfast if that is the only means of keeping you in circulation. It is rather unfortunate that you will have to leave Liverpool at a time when things are opening out, but perhaps you will be able to do something in Belfast. At any rate if you have to go, try and get back to the Merseyside as soon as you can.

If you can make arrangements to go over to Liverpool occasionally to see how the lads are making out, that will be very useful; but make thorough arrangements for the continuation of the work in your absence, and keep in touch regularly with the lads, if only by letter.

Re. the minutes, it is not an important point and there is no need for you to worry about it.

We are pleased to see that you are doing so well with the miners near your area. Make sure that this is continued even if you have to move. Jock will probably be dropping you a line on the question of the miners very soon. Let us know how you make out in Wigan.

You'll have seen the letter from the IS to the RSL by now. It looks as if the old "clap handies" policy is going to receive a severe jolt. It's about time too. We will let you know all political developments as they take place.

Hoping to hear from you soon,

*Yours fraternally,*

*E. Grant*

Secretary

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## **RSL to IS**

July 28 1942

Dear Friends,

We have received the copy of your letter of January 13 1942 (the original of which failed to reach us) and your letter of June 21 1942. As you request, we have given serious consideration to your remarks and now give you our opinion of them.

### **1. The internal regime of the WIL.**

Our criticism here is simply that the regime is not founded upon the principle of democratic centralism. To us, and we assume to you also, the maintenance of democratic centralism inside the organisation is a question of principle. We fail therefore to see how our criticism in this connection should “astonish” you. Our document, as our title shows, is our political estimation of the WIL. It would be impossible for us therefore to omit our attitude on this question of the internal regime. Nowhere do we state that “were this the only difference between us and the WIL” we should refuse discussions with them. In our opinion the present

internal regime springs from the utterly unprincipled way in which the WIL was formed and helps to provide the basis for its present unprincipled policies.

So far as the factual correctness of our estimation of the WIL internal regime is concerned, we can only say that all the material and evidence in our possession confirms it.

## **2. The attitude towards the war.**

You state that our “whole method consists in taking a phrase, tearing it from the context and showing that it might permit an opportunist interpretation even if this interpretation is contrary to the meaning of the whole article”, and you give one example in support of this statement – our quotation from Youth for Socialism of August 1940. Now we are well aware that such a method can be adopted and consequently we do not need to be shown its “flaws” by a quotation from Lenin. We deny utterly, however, that we have used such a procedure . The whole section of our document in question is an attempt to show how, under the impact of events, an erroneous attitude towards the war gradually grew up in the WIL; how it left our position to adopt a centrist one. Naturally the first manifestations were vague and ambiguous, as is in any case typical of centrism – contradictions occur in the same article.

Now as to the fairness of our conclusion, from the quotation in question, that the WIL would have supported resistance by the French workers to German fascism invasion, within the framework of the French imperialist state. In the first place it is implied in the whole passage we quote (only part of which you reproduce), secondly it flows from the attitude clearly expressed in the same article that Hitler, not Churchill, is the worst enemy of the British workers. Finally almost precisely this policy of workers’ resistance to German invasion, within the framework of capitalist rule, was advocated for the British workers by the WIL a few months later when they put forward the slogan of “Arm the workers” as an

answer to the threat of invasion.

With this slogan, you state, “we arrive at the first serious difference”. This is correct in so far as all the previous differences given by us in this section of our statement merely provide the basis for and lead up to this slogan. You further state “Your principal argument against the slogan is that British imperialism proved very well able to protect itself against invasion. Thus you have been right against the WIL thanks to... Hitler, who has not tried invasion.” This remark of yours truly astounds us. Can it be that our document reached you in an incomplete or imperfect form? For what you have said is (to use your own words) “not only false, but unfair.” Let us quote from our document:

“Arming the workers to resist invasion by Hitler is stressed as the main and the most important task. Nowhere is there any suggestion that it is only in the interests of the working class to resist invasion after the resources of the country have been under the control of the workers and that, till this has taken place, the workers have no interest in national defence.”

This, friends, is our most fundamental criticism of this slogan and this you utterly ignore. But even apart from this, their basic political error, the WIL and apparently you also fail to recognise the real basis for the capitulatory attitude of the French bourgeoisie towards Hitler and the absence of this basis in the case of the British bourgeoisie. We will not elaborate on this question here, you will find our attitude clearly expressed in the statement On the attitude of our movement towards the war which was passed by our conference of September, 1941 and which you have received. We would add merely that this basic difference between the situation of the British bourgeoisie did not, as you put it, “refuse to trust its own people” but actually armed them (under its own control of course) in the Home Guard. This fact makes the WIL slogan even more “offensive” not to the British bourgeoisie, but to our whole attitude towards the war. Incidentally, you seem quite unaware that the WIL are still putting forward this slogan today: “Arming of the workers under the control of committees of workers elected in factories, unions and in the streets against the danger of Petainism.” (Point 10 of

“Our programme for power”, Socialist Appeal, July 1942).

On the question of the use of the word “chauvinism” we must state that to imply, as the WIL imply, that German and not British imperialism is the main enemy is, in actual fact, “unity with the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary interests of the proletariat”, no matter what “left” coloration may be given to it: for it can only serve to divert the workers’ attention from their real tasks and strengthen, not weaken, the class truce.

As regards the slogan “nationalise the war industries under workers’ control”, we do [not] oppose this slogan when it is linked with class issues such as the maintaining and improving of workers’ conditions, and under circumstances in which it can be made clear that “control” is not separate from the question of power, be it either by a Labour government, or Soviet power according to the progress of the working class movement. But we do oppose it as a means of increasing production during imperialist war. And it is on precisely this line that the WIL advocate it. (“Workers’ control of production to end chaos and mismanagement in industry to be exercised through workers’ committees.” Point 4 of “Our programme for power”, Socialist Appeal, July 1942). It is just this point of difference that you ignore and thus your remarks on this subject have no relation to the point at issue. It is true, as you say, that any slogan, however correct, can be supported for patriotic reasons, but this does not mean that we can put it forward with a patriotic coloration. To call for the nationalisation of the war industries under workers’ control in order to increase production today is to do just this.

Before going on to discuss the question of the Labour Party we must point out that all the above differences flow from the attitude which we have adopted towards the American military policy and that any discussion cannot ignore this fact. In your letter of January 13 1942 you state “among all the documents we did not find one giving a precise criticism of the American resolution and presenting another policy.” You are referring to our September 1941 conference. It is quite true that none of the documents in question gave a precise criticism of



the American resolution because the resolution itself was available to us only just before the conference. We based our criticisms upon the policy as interpreted by Cannon. As however you state in the same letter that Cannon correctly interprets the policy we would have thought that you could have already commenced discussions with us upon our criticism of his line. In any case another statement on the subject was drawn up last October and sent to you. It and the previous statement together with other relevant documents were passed by our special conference a few weeks back and will shortly be received by you. We hope that this will lead to a fruitful discussion between us. We have noted with some disquiet that in your present letter (of June 21 1942) you appear to ignore all our most fundamental criticisms and to concentrate upon points of relatively secondary importance but assume that this was merely due to inadvertence. As regards the other policy to be counterpoised by us to the American policy, we must point out that our policy is that of War and the Fourth [International] and the Transitional programme, i.e. that of the Bolsheviki in the last war. We do not consider that the circumstances of this war (or rather this war after June 1940) justify any new policy.

### **3. The problem of the Labour Party.**

(a) “Labour to power” versus “A third Labour government”. We agree with you that there seems to be no serious difference between the groups on this question. When the workers support a third Labour government they obviously wish it to have a majority in the House of Commons, which its two predecessors had not. What is the difference between this and Labour to power. Incidentally we have been advocating the slogan of a “Third Labour government” since 1934 and this is the first criticism from you or your predecessors.

In recent years the WIL seems to us to have adopted the deliberately vague slogan “Labour to power” in order to free themselves from being bound by our clear slogan “For a third Labour government with a majority”.

Judging from their ambiguous formulation and their past vacillations (support of CP and pacifist candidates against official Labour candidates) we feel reasonably confident that, when a confused mass “left” wing movement develops towards the rupture of the class truce on the electoral field, serious divergences, the seeds of which already exist, will reveal themselves between those who support official Labour Party candidates and those who support adventuristic “left” candidates against official LP candidates, both within the WIL and between the WIL and ourselves.

(b) Work in the Labour Party. Our position on this question remains that laid down by past international conferences for the British section. It is contained in a recent document Industrial work and our perspectives which we are sending you again. We have a means of unhampered independent expression, as you are aware, in our paper the Militant. The difference between us and the WIL on this question are essentially the same as have split our movement in this and other countries in the past. Experience has shown that the two points of view cannot be contained in the same organisation.

## **Conclusion**

From your letter we gather that you are in one hundred percent [agreement] with the policy of the WIL. True you say that it “may” have made mistakes but nowhere do you specify them. We would therefore ask you to explain to us how it happens that a group which came into existence... “as the result of purely personal grievances” (Founding conference of the Fourth International) and which was characterised as “being led on a path of unprincipled clique politics which can only land them in the mire”, (Ibid.) and as “irresponsible splitters and clique fighters” should now, after four years be characterised by you as “standing entirely on the ground of the principles and methods of the FI”? While the official [section], has apparently, in your opinion taken an entirely [in]correct course. Also we would ask you when and by what body the above characterisation of the WIL made in 1938 by the Founding conference has been reversed? You yourselves do not even appear to be aware of the past of the WIL

since you state on the question of international affiliation “we would not say that the WIL is completely sinless in this matter”, while despite [the fact that] we hold fast [to the] history of our negotiations with the WIL you condemn us for a “completely negative attitude”.

At our last conference a few weeks ago, we decided to reopen discussions with the WIL upon the basis of our political line. These discussions have begun but unless (as it is most unlikely) they lead to political unity, organisational unity is out of the question. We also “have the perspective of profound commotions in the next period” but we think that the best way to meet them is on the basis of a disciplined firmly knit organisation with a correct policy.

*CC RSL*

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## **Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, July 29 1942

Dear Jim,

Many thanks for your letter and for the material you have sent from the Yanks including the material from Labor Action. As usual with these people they have been eating their words immediately after uttering them. They have reproduced the pictures from the article on Hong Kong in the April Socialist Appeal – but the usual distortions on our attitude can be expected.

Unfortunately there are no more copies available of the Permanent Revolution, so I'm afraid comrade S. will be disappointed, perhaps you could lend him a copy. I expect Jock gave you a card for Socialist Appeal reporters for which you asked. He has written an excellent reply to Hall[2] which I expect you have seen and it will be reproduced in the SA and also in leaflet form. I would certainly like to get hold of some of the mythical £10 we are supposed to be earning!

In spite of the efforts of the capitalist press and of Hall to damage us, in the long run it will be of benefit to us. Millions of workers have now heard of the WIL and the SA and we have already benefited by letters of sympathy and support which we have received from all over England. We will probably gain quite a number of new members as a result. Here is the address of one contact who wishes to join: Mr H. B. Bradshaw, 2 Bowness Road, Preston, Lancs. We have written to him saying that you will write and make arrangements to call as the Lancashire organiser.

For the last period we have been worried because Manchester was the only large city in England in which we did not have a branch in spite of its good tradition in the working class movement. It looks as if Hall and the bourgeoisie have solved the problem for us. Somebody who wrote for an SA has asked to join us and says that she has a number of interested friends. Her address is – Mrs Ellen Lewis, 8 Cuyon Avenue, Victoria Park, Manchester – and we have written to her saying that you will make all arrangements. Here is an opportunity for you to do your stuff and wipe off a blot in the political landscape where we have no branch. Incidentally you are too hard on the Daily Express, you should have read the Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and Herald!

We have received support and some letters from miners all over the country, all our contacts and all who have read the SA, plus many of those who have not, have given us expressions of sympathy and support. We have become a definite tendency known in the working class movement.

Graham has written and suggested that he could do with more assistance from Liverpool in organising the contacts in Nelson and Lancashire. I have written to him pointing out that it is practically impossible for you to do so because of work, distance, etc. I have explained that you can hardly get time to organise the Liverpool and Merseyside area, let alone a locality 70-100 miles away.

As you have met Jock and probably discussed all the outstanding political questions which face us, I don't think it will be necessary to write anything on these questions at the moment. Please write on any points which you would like to discuss. Sorry not to have written before but as you can imagine we have been very busy with the bourgeoisie, RSL, etc.

Yours fraternally,

*E. Grant*

*Sec.*

PS: We are sending some back pamphlets for Stewart. This is the best we can do. Tell him I was unable to get anything on military subjects. Ted.

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**Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, August 17 1942

Dear Jimmy,

Sorry not to have answered your letter immediately we received it, but we have been very busy preparing for the conference, and I did not think the matter was so urgent.

First of all I would like to impress you with the importance of attending our first national conference and bringing with you, if possible, some of the more advanced comrades as well. Please do everything you can to come, it is really vital that all the comrades who are the most advanced elements in the group should attend. If necessary make financial sacrifices, beg, borrow or steal the money, but for heaven's sake move heaven and earth to try and attend if possible. Drop all other work for that weekend and do your best to come. Incidentally, if there are any close contacts, not members of the group, who are reliable and you think would be benefited thereby, you can bring them along as well, if they are sufficiently interested to wish to attend. Anyway, we are confident of seeing you next weekend to discuss all matters outstanding.

Re. the contacts in Preston. We advise you to take a very harsh stand on this question. We are going to raise this question very sharply with JL. What the hell does he think he is up to? He will be in London over the next weekend and would like you to be present at the discussions with him. I do not think that the question needs elaboration in this short note as we will discuss it fully with you next weekend.

Work [is] proceeding throughout the country favourably. Will give all replies to your last letters next weekend.

Very best wishes,

Yours,

Ted

PS: Whatever happens be at the conference.

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## **Ted Grant to RSL**

London, September 16 1942

RSL

Dear comrade,

You will have received our letter of September 4 1942[3], which put forward our position on fusion. As you see we are very anxious that the much needed political and organisational clarification should be speeded up.

We have elected our committee of three, and will be pleased to meet your representatives on Sunday, September 27th at 10 am at the above address.

Re. your suggestions that there should be no joint discussion bulletins but that material should be circulated by both organisations independently, we accept this suggestion. But on the question of the arrangement of subjects, we believe that the Labour Party tactic and the question of the “Third Labour government” or “Labour to power” should be discussed separately, otherwise it would lead to some confusion.

We believe that there is no reason why your committee should object to these problems being discussed separately. Apart from this we would accept the arrangement of subjects to be debated as you have outlined them.

We are still waiting to receive the conference documents which you promised us in your last letter.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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**Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, September 17 1942



Dear Jim,

I'm sorry not to have heard from you for such a long time and presume that you are either very busy or ill. B. Bradshaw writes from Preston complaining that he never heard from you and the shop at Preston complains that they never received any papers. We have sent the material to them.

Has Shindler visited you to discuss the contacts in Preston? The right faction has landed as we predicted – in a hell of a mess! You have received copies of the new ultimatum issued to them by DDH and Co., you can see the position by this in a nutshell.

Why didn't any of the Liverpool comrades pick up the papers at the station last month? We want to get the SA out right on the first of the month for the next issue and are busy preparing it now. Could you send us an article on general conditions among the dockers for the next issue – by Saturday? If you can, it will go into the issue. I think this is ample time for you to collect the material and send in the article.

How are things proceeding on the Merseyside now that you have made the new arrangement? Is it working out ok in Liverpool and does it facilitate the work of the group?

The Coventry lads are going ahead and building up sales, contacts, and the organisation generally at a rapid pace. They threaten to outstrip the Merseyside if you don't watch your step! Sadie Morris has given us the name of a contact (given below) who is a student of Liverpool university and who is supposed to have a dozen to eighteen YCLers under his influence. Look him up and see what can be gained. How did the YCLer who wrote to you turn out?

Yours fraternally,

*E. Grant*

*Sec.*

PS: Harold B. Bradshaw has written to us again saying that he has still not heard from you. In case there is any mistake, his address is – 2 Bowness road, Farringdon Park, Preston. We have written to him saying that you will contact him immediately.

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**Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, October 20 1942

Dear Jim,

Thank you very much of your letter. The next meeting of the central committee will be held in London on Saturday, November 7th, the day before our public meeting.

I am very anxious to have a thorough discussion with you on the question of unity with the RSL and the IS. We are having a committee meeting between ourselves and the RSL on Sunday, 25th, and if you can possibly come to this

meeting and also attend the central committee meeting on the 7th, it would be a good idea for you to find out for yourself what the real position is.

Will discuss all the problems, Liverpool and the group generally, when we see you, since we are busy at present with the Socialist Appeal. If you can possibly manage it within the next few days – could you send us the long promised article on the docks?

Yours fraternally,

*Ted Grant*

PS: Please send to us, or bring with you, your file of your correspondence with the IS as we would like to see it.

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## **CC of the RSL to IS**

October 28 1942

Dear friends,

In view of the prohibition you placed on us of criticising the WIL in any of our publications, we are unable to reply openly to the open attacks which they make upon us in their recent pamphlet *Preparing for power*. They particularly criticise

our Labour Party tactic, which was, as you know, endorsed by the international in 1938. What follows in quotation marks is an extract from the above mentioned pamphlet of the WIL's.

“...The present period is characterised by a radicalisation and ferment within the working class, without a mass political vent for this dissatisfaction. Insofar as the workers are moving at all at present, they are expressing themselves in the industrial field. At a later stage they will turn to the Labour Party. But to come to the workers who are advanced enough to look for a road out – with the disguise of the ‘left wing of the Labour Party’ is idiotic. These workers will turn to the ILP or to the CP, but not to the so-called ‘socialist left of the Labour Party’ ...”

I attach a Militant heading to demonstrate how the RSL uses the subheading “Organ of the Socialist Left of the Labour Party”.

Since they, the WIL, have made this open attack, we shall assume, unless we receive a reply from you on this subject within two months from the date of this letter, that we have the right to reply to these attacks, openly.

*The CC of the RSL*

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**IS to WIL**

New York, November 20 1942

Dear friends,

My last letter to you was dated October 1st. I am regularly receiving your publications, which I must say, I read with great interest. Herewith enclosed you will find a copy of a letter of the CC of the RSL to us, as well as a copy of our answer. The public attack on your side was really a mistake in the present situation and we must try, all of us, not to repeat such an incident.

We have just seen for the first time, the resolution passed by the conference of the RSL in June, 1942, on their relation with your group. Apart from some rather dubious considerations, the two points decided upon are excellent and coincide completely with our own resolution of August 28th. We must now work with all our energy for their realisation. The CC of the RSL informed us that during October, a committee of six, three from each side, has been created, and that the discussion has already begun in certain areas. We would be extremely glad to receive further news from you.

Best greetings,

*E. C. Clapper*

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**IS to RSL**

New York, November 21 1942

Dear friends,

We received your letter of October 28th on the public attack by the WIL. We are now engaged in negotiations with the WIL, and this incident must be treated not in a formalistic, but in a realistic way. Your policy has been attacked publicly and, of course, nobody can deny you the right to answer publicly. But we must tell you frankly that if we were in your place, we would not make use of such a right. You would lose nothing in doing this and you would strengthen, not weaken, your position in the negotiations.

This is only our advice. We repeat, nobody can deny you the right to answer. But if you make use of this right, we insist that your answer be moderate and pedagogic. You can very well explain the reasons and the character of your work in the Labour Party, but we must ask you to abstain from any criticism of the WIL, which would provoke an answer from their side. The opening of a public controversy at the present time and in such manner, would be most unfortunate.

We think fit to send copy of this letter as well as your letter of October 28th to the WIL.

Best greetings,

*E. C. Clapper*

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**E.C. Clapper to WIL**

New York, November 27 1942

Dear friends,

I trust you have by now my letter of November 20th. I received your letter of October 31st, as well as the enclosed minutes of the October 25th meeting. I must say that on all the points raised at that meeting I would rather be on your side. The attitude of the RSL on the question of the joint bulletin is especially significant. I think you should insist on the RSL's own resolution at their last conference, which decided for a joint bulletin and a unification conference after a six month period of discussion. You should firmly hold to these two points. I would appreciate very much your prompt writing and sending of documents in the present period.

Very sincerely,

*E. C. Clapper*

# **A criticism by the RSL of the WIL pamphlet Preparing for power**

**By Revolutionary Socialist League**

December 1942[4]

In our document Our political criticism of the WIL we state: “on the two fundamental issues which face our movement today, that of our attitude to the imperialist war and that of the method of building the new revolutionary party, the WIL has adopted policies basically opposed to those of Bolshevism. It is an organisation, not moving politically in our direction, but moving away from us.” If any further evidence of the fact that the WIL is a centrist body, and moving away from Bolshevism, were needed, their recent document Preparing for power[5] provides all that is necessary.

In order to confine this discussion, as far as possible, to the most important issue, we are refraining from raising here criticisms regarding matters of secondary importance. A whole series of criticisms could, in fact, be raised and their omission here does not preclude us from raising them at some suitable opportunity. Meantime, however, our criticisms will centre round the WIL attitude towards the war and the problems raised by it, and the WIL attitude towards the Labour Party.

A basic defect of the WIL document lies in the complete omission of any real explanation for the decline of British imperialism and its defeats. The weakness of British imperialism lies in the fact that, owing to the uneven development of



capitalism, its accumulated imperialist booty is now out of proportion to the relation which its economic (and, consequently, military) strength bears towards that of rival imperialisms. Hence it finds it difficult or impossible to maintain its conquests unaided. Hence, therefore, its defeats and its forced reliance on the USA.

But, according to the WIL document, everything is explained by “the old school tie blimps in the colonial service and the armed forces, whose stupidity and incompetence is but a reflection of the fact that the British bourgeois system has completely outlived itself,” and by the “enfeeblement and decline of the ruling class.”

It is true that we also read “in reality the process of decline has been going on for many years before the war. The altering relationship of forces between the powers was bearing less and less relationship to Britain’s nominal position.” But this “altering relationship of forces” is apparently considered to be due to the “senility and decay of British imperialism,” the causes of which are unexplained, not to the fact that certain of its rivals have experienced a relatively more rapid rate of economic and military development.

It is, of course, quite true that “the British bourgeois system has completely outlived itself,” but this is true of all bourgeois systems in this epoch of the general world decline of imperialism. Even Britain’s rivals in this war are decaying. Thus the WIL gives us no real reason for Britain’s defeats and difficulties and, moreover, by stressing and exaggerating the weakness of Britain and ignoring those of her rivals, gives a totally false picture of the position.

The British ruling class is far from being “completely senile and incapable of even conducting her own wars.” Today it can claim a greater volume of production per head of the population than any of the Allied powers and one that is possibly greater than any other country in the world. British imperialism is far from losing confidence in itself. It is not our job to uphold the conduct of British

imperialism nor its military prestige, but such gross distortions as those contained in the WIL analysis lead inevitably to false policies.

Nor are these false policies long in emerging. “The corruption and incompetence, industrial and militarily, raises sharply in the minds of the workers the question of the regime.” There is no question of misunderstanding this sentence. It means that the workers are questioning the right of capitalism to continue as the system in this country. This, before the workers have even begun to display a mass sentiment for peace, while they still support the imperialist war and are, in fact, anxious to see it more efficiently and more offensively conducted. Either all previous history was accidental and from it no lessons can be learned, or else the WIL utterly misunderstands and distorts not only the present position of British imperialism, but also the present stage of development of working class consciousness. We incline to the latter theory. The mood of the masses is still predominantly in support of the imperialist war and the British bourgeoisie is conducting the war as efficiently as the limitations of “democratic capitalism” permit.

These factors do not provide for the “rapid maturing” of “all the conditions for social explosions.” What social explosions do come, as come they will, they will not arise upon the basis of demands by the workers for a more efficient prosecution of the war. No class struggles can arise on this issue because it is not a class issue as far as the workers are concerned. This is not their war and they have no class interest in victory in it.

At present the masses are under the ideological leadership of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois and hence support the imperialist war.

Many defeats have been suffered by the British bourgeoisie in this war and sections of the workers have, as a result, criticised the leadership of the bourgeoisie and demanded a more efficient prosecution of the struggle. But this is not a proletarian class reaction to the situation, it is a petty bourgeois reaction

and is possible only because the workers are still imbued with alien class ideology. Such working class discontent will stop at grumbling, in the same way as the similar and even more vocal discontent of the petty bourgeois does, and may even be transformed by British victories into greater support for the imperialist government.

It cannot lead to working class action, just because the demand for a more efficient prosecution of the imperialist war is not a class demand for the workers. Moreover, class action by the workers, as they know, would yet further impair the efficiency of British imperialism. British defeats can lead to social explosions, but they will be explosions caused by war weariness, by a desire to end the fruitless slaughter, to escape from the economic hardships of war and to bring an enduring peace and prosperity to the world.

Class action by the workers against the bourgeoisie is at present in an early stage and confined to relatively small sections of the proletariat. It is taking the form of strikes on economic issues. But during an imperialist war such strikes inevitably bring the workers into conflict with the imperialist state machine. The inevitable increase in this strike movement will bring about breaches in the class truce and will eventually smash it.

This process will be accompanied by a profound change in the workers' attitude to the war. The present desire for a more efficient prosecution of the war will be replaced by the demand for peace. There is no mention of this demand in the WIL document. Yet in *War and the Fourth International*[6] we read "The revolutionary struggle for peace, which takes on ever wider and bolder forms is the surest means of 'turning the imperialist war into a civil war'." But omission of all mention of the slogan of peace by the WIL is, of course to be expected, for they do not raise the slogan of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war"; their slogan, nowhere explicitly stated in the document, it is true, but implicit in it and in their other propaganda is "turn the imperialist war into a workers' anti-fascist war." In other words, their main attack is directed not against the British bourgeoisie, but its rivals, the fascist regimes. Their main charge against the

British bourgeoisie is that it does not fight those rivals efficiently enough!

It is illuminating to observe that the perspective of workers' conquest of power during the war is pushed right into the background by the WIL, indeed, it is barely mentioned. They give three possible terminations of the war. The first is by the ruling class capitulating to Hitler, "under threat of revolution... as the French bourgeoisie did". Incidentally, where can the WIL show the slightest real evidence that the French bourgeoisie capitulated "under threat of revolution"? But this, say the WIL, would be "immediately to provoke an uprising among the masses", with the object of continuing the war(!). We would ask the WIL here to explain to us why, on their premises, no such uprising took place among the French workers? The WIL even believe that not only are the workers better patriots than the capitalists, but that the "Labour leaders" would "place themselves at the head of the masses in order to continue the war"(!!!). Once again, why did none of this take place in France on the WIL's premises, and, yet more to the point, why was the development of the Russian revolution in 1917 so very different? In the past it has been the practice of our movement to regard the Russian revolution as typical, at least in broad outline, of the proletarian uprisings during the imperialist war. It has been left to the WIL to treat it as an exception.

The second possible termination to the war is given as the victory of Britain and her allies over the Axis powers.

"Once the masses compare the glittering promises about 'after the war' [with what they are to compare them is not given – RSL] their indignation will rise to unprecedented heights and revolutionary explosions would result."

"The prospect of stalemate and a compromise peace" which is the WIL's third choice is correctly regarded by them as "even more remote."

“Long before the war had reached such a stage, and it would require several years, the endurance of the masses would have reached breaking point and the stability of the imperialist regimes would be put to the test. Revolution would begin in Europe or Asia and alter the whole balance of forces.”

And this is the only reference to revolution through “war weariness” in the whole of a document, written during an imperialist war and entitled Preparing for power and emanating from an organisation that claims to be revolutionary! The termination of the imperialist war which we envisage and for which we are struggling is precisely this fourth possibility which the WIL so contemptuously push into the background. But then we are “old fashioned” enough to base our activity upon turning the imperialist war into a civil war.

Our basic criticism of the WIL’s centrist policy with regard to the war can be found in greater detail in our conference resolutions and to these we refer the members of the WIL for further details.

With regard to the section entitled The possibilities of fascism in Britain, we must suggest to the WIL that they are in error in stating that “Mosley could only come to power on the basis of German bayonets.” This suggests that the German bourgeoisie, if victorious could set up a fascist regime here. This is false and in contradiction to the experiences which have taken place on the continent. Fascism cannot be imported in this way. All that the Germans could do would be to set up some form of Bonapartist regime. Actually the position of British fascism would be greatly weakened by such conquest by German imperialism. But we, of course, realise that the WIL needs this picture of Mosley triumphing with the help of German bayonets in order to provide a background for their policy of veiled support for the imperialist war.

So far as the Labour Party tactic is concerned, we do not intend to deal with it here at great length. The WIL reader may find our attitude set out in our conference resolution Industrial work and our perspectives. Some of their own

past internal documents up to so recent a date as 1941 should also be of assistance to them in this connection. We shall confine ourselves to a few comments here.

The WIL confirms the correctness of the tactic of entry into the LP up to the end of the first 18 months of the war by referring to the fact that the ILP was at that time turning towards the LP. While it is, of course, natural for centrists respectfully to observe the orientations of other centrists, to attempt to model their conduct upon them, we would point out to the WIL that when, towards the end of 1936, Trotsky and the IS first raised the question of our entry into the LP, no such attitude existed on the part of the ILP.

The WIL state:

“The whole idea motivating the entrism tactic is to enter a reformist or centrist organisation which is in a state of flux, where political life is at a high pitch, and where the membership is steadily moving towards the left. It is essentially a short term perspective of work in a milieu where favourable prospects exist for obtaining results in a relatively short space of time.”

So far as the first statement is concerned, it is manifestly false so far as the entry into the British Labour Party was concerned. If the WIL members entered the LP expecting to find it in a state of flux, with a high pitch of political life, etc., they have been a long time discovering their mistake! So far as the second sentence is concerned it is also false so far as our entry in this country was concerned. The greater reserve strength of British imperialism has made developments inside the British LP slower than on the continent. We knew this when we entered. We also knew, incidentally, that imperialist war would at first delay this internal development still further, only to accelerate it greatly at a later stage.

The WIL admit that “at a later stage” the workers “will turn to the Labour Party”. They admit that at present the only movement is on the industrial field. But though realising that the political expression of this industrial movement will come first inside the LP, they refuse to attempt to orientate the workers today towards the LP, i.e. to facilitate and hasten this movement. They fear that if they do so the workers will turn to the CP and the ILP, although they have already agreed that the workers will turn to the LP.

But with regard to this same question of the workers turning to the LP at a certain stage in their struggles, we find in the WIL document a certain ambiguity, which savours strongly of the double book-keeping of “third period” Stalinism. In one place we read:

“Insofar as the workers are moving at all at present, they are expressing themselves on the industrial field. At a later stage they will turn to the Labour Party.”

This is a clear statement of the position and perspectives. But we also read:

“At that stage [i.e. before the war – RSL] it seemed the most likely course of events that the awakening of the masses would move completely on the traditional course and pass through the Labour Party. But the outbreak of war cut across the development of events and produced a different pattern.

“It is useless to base the tactics of today on the possibilities of tomorrow.

“If [our emphasis – RSL] as the result of the mass upsurge, hundreds of thousands and millions participate actively in the organisation of the Labour

Party...

“But history never repeats itself in exactly the same way. The masses of the workers, above all the advanced stratum, have a certain scepticism towards the Labour leaders.”

All these statements are obviously intended to throw doubt on the first quoted statement that the masses will turn to the LP. The WIL or its leaders, have not yet had the courage to deny openly, in writing, that the workers will turn first to the LP, but they are preparing the way for doing so. We may hear in the future that the masses are “skipping over” the LP phase and turning directly to... the WIL.

In finishing this section on the LP tactic, let us quote to the WIL a few passages from their document Contribution by the Workers’ International League to the discussion on the tasks of Bolshevik Leninists in Britain, issued in 1938[7]. We would point out, in advance that none of the ideas contained in these passages originated in the WIL, they were merely borrowed by the WIL from our organisation.

“For the Labour Party, functioning as it does in bourgeois democracy, war time is election time, and in the peace periods between elections, it becomes a mere skeleton, passively supported by its individual, trade union and co-operative members. At the present moment, except for the passive ripples of by-elections, its work is carried on by a small minority consisting in the main of the bureaucracy, a sprinkling of ambitious careerists, a few veterans who support the bureaucracy and the factions sent in by external organisations.”

Hardly, we would note in passing, an “organisation which is in a state of flux”, “where political life is at a high pitch” and “where the membership is steadily moving towards the left”!



“The mass membership for whose benefit the various postures are adopted are [sic – RSL] notably absent from the auditorium...

“But far from negating the activity of the revolutionary socialists within the Labour Party, the peace time structure gives them a political weight out of all proportion to their numerical strength...

“As the crisis forces increasing numbers of workers from passive to active support of the Labour Party, they find within the party a nucleus around which to gather, and party growth means growth of the left wing.”

In conclusion, we must state that the basis for all the main political mistakes of the WIL is to be found in the defencist position it has adopted with regard to the imperialist war since the fall of France first made the defeat of British imperialism a real possibility. Defencism rarely shows itself in its open, naked form when it first arises, especially in a left-centrist organisation.

Concealment is especially necessary in an organisation still professing to stand upon the principles of revolutionary defeatism. The WIL is attempting to conceal the essential chauvinism of its policies by using today slogans which are revolutionary in a period of acute class struggle, e.g. workers' control of production, election of officers, etc. It is using these slogans in such a way as to imbue them with a counter-revolutionary content, e.g. workers' control of production in order to increase production for the war. And, in order to justify its abuse of these demands, it has to attempt to describe the present situation as though it was, in fact, one of acute class conflict.

Hence its absurd under-estimation of the strength of British imperialism, its

exaggeration of the discontent of the masses. Hence even its policy with regard to the Labour Party tactic. For though the WIL attitude on this subject seems to be ultra-left, and is in fact so, if taken in isolation, it links up with and forms an essential part of their general opportunism. For to justify this opportunism, to be able to cover it with a cloak of revolutionary phrases, the WIL has to paint its picture of the present situation in revolutionary colours, it has to speak as though it were on the eve of the seizure of power! And, with such a perspective, the Labour Party tactic not only cannot be used, but actually becomes a hindrance.

We are well aware that the WIL can point to a number of passages in their document which state or imply a contrary estimate of the present situation. But these are merely yet further examples of that thoroughly dishonest system of double bookkeeping which we have mentioned above. In practice, the WIL claim that, for instance Lenin's remarks on the "threatening catastrophe" (written on the eve of the seizure of power!) apply today, and such is the basis of their propaganda.

Adopted by majority of CC by postal ballot on December 22 1942.

## **Correspondence December 1942 - January 1943**

### **Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, December 14 1942

Dear Jim,

Many thanks for your letters. I am sending you back the correspondence for which you ask. I have just received the internal bulletin and will send it on to you as soon as I have read it.

I received the cash OK from Millie, and so far as I can judge the organisational proposals seem quite good and if you can carry them out the basis for a sound growth in the area should have been laid. The group as you know is making big strides throughout the country and we look to Merseyside, this containing some members, more experienced and with longer membership than most groups in the country. We expect gains organisationally, politically and financially as there is every reason that you should be able to do this especially with the new reorganisation.

The RSL are up to their old tricks and our relations with Lawrence and Co. are still the same. From information we have Stuart will be visiting us very soon. Anyway, let us hope in the next year the whole mess will be cleared up. In your last letters you didn't raise any political questions so there is nothing much for me to raise with you. You should be able to make a good headway with the ILP

and if you do systematic work in the outside areas as you indicate.

I hope you will be able to visit London soon and am looking forward to seeing you.

Yours fraternally,

*Ted Grant*

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## **Ted Grant to RSL**

London, January 19 1943

Secretary, RSL

Dear comrade,

We understand that your organisation is holding a conference early in February. To facilitate and speed up the unity negotiations between our organisations, we propose that two representatives of our CC should participate in your sessions, and in particular the session dealing with the question of relations with the IS and unification.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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## **Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, January 30 1943

Dear Jim,

Pleased to hear from you again. We will discuss the Irish question fully with you when you are in London. As the CC meeting takes place next week, February 6 1943, I will not make any comment as we can thrash out the questions when you are here.

A central study circle running three times a week seems rather excessive, but this and other local group work can be discussed fully at the CC.

You will be interested to hear that the latest position re the RSL is absolutely farcical. The whole of the so called "right" has been expelled. Not only that but knowing these people as we do and their irresponsible social-club politics, if you remember we predicted that within a few months of the "right" being expelled that Harber would expel Robinson, or that Robinson would expel Harber. We were wrong. Apparently these maniacs could not wait as long as that. Robinson

had a resolution up for the expulsion of Harber at the forthcoming conference. Harber who is in control of the organisation then pulled a fast one on some pretext or other, expelled Robinson and the whole of his faction. So that the situation now is that three-quarters of the organisation is either suspended or expelled but we will tell you all the news when we see you in person.

If you can get something going in Manchester, that would be a real step forward for the organisation. It is a serious omission that this is the only large industrial city where we have not a group established.

Unfortunately we are sold right out of Appeals and have not a single copy to spare. Millie says she has sent one hundred copies of the January issue of SA to Dublin – and this can be left to her. We will send you the other material you need.

Give Frank our regards and tell him we hope he will soon be better and active again.

With Warmest regards and hoping to see you at the weekend,

Yours fraternally,

*Ted*

PS: The treasurer is after your scalp!

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## **Ted Grant to RSL**

London, January 30 1943

To the RSL

Dear comrades,

In reply to your letter of January 14th you will see comrade A's [Armstrong] fine record of working class activity in the current issue of the Socialist Appeal. Owing to the magnificent response of militant workers both in this country and Belfast, sending resolutions to the North Ireland prime minister, and rendering financial assistance, the desired result has been achieved and comrade A. has been released.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

Sec.

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## **Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane**

London, February 8 1943

Dear Jim,

Unfortunately we received your letter and the minutes too late to be able to do anything. We are rather annoyed that you did not think of telegraphing, as you did on the last occasion. Had you done so we would have telegraphed the money to you immediately. In future, if there is any urgency on any matter, please do not write but wire.

The next central committee meeting is arranged for April 3rd and 4th, and we will see you then.

It is particularly unfortunate you were not present for this meeting as there were many important items to discuss. At this meeting G. Healy resigned from the organisation and announced his intention of joining the ILP. The CC, faced with this situation unanimously decided to expel GH from the organisation. He refused to make any statement, but nevertheless, for purposes of clarification a general membership meeting has been called for all the London groups, for Sunday, February 14th. Despite the fact that he has been expelled, GH has been invited to place his case before the membership, in order to ensure full democratic discussion of the position. The situation is bad, but perhaps inevitable in view of GH's attitude in the past. It has come as no surprise to those who were aware of his position. Together with all groups you will receive a copy of the minutes giving full details.

I see that Liverpool is attempting once again to reorganise and place the group on a sound financial basis. Let us hope that this time you will succeed in establishing a strong group politically and financially.



We are rather disappointed to receive no material for the Socialist Appeal from the Merseyside, or any of the areas that you are covering. The CC has decided to issue regular supplements to the paper. If these are to be maintained it is vitally necessary that we should receive industrial and local material from all over the country. Even if you cannot send articles, at least send the material which can be worked up into articles.

If any of the political questions you wish to raise are urgent, write and let us know, otherwise you can raise them at the next CC meeting.

Yours fraternally,

*Ted*

PS: Thank you very much for the Fourth Internationals and the pamphlets you sent us. If you have any more material please send it as we have received nothing from SWPers for months.

# **Statement of the PB on the expulsion from WIL of G. Healy**

**at the Central Committee meeting of February 7 1943**

**By WIL Political Bureau**

February 15 1943

The expulsion of comrade G. Healy from our organisation will no doubt come as a shock to many of our members. The apparent suddenness of the action has made it necessary for the PB to explain the background of his expulsion from WIL.

At the conclusion of his industrial report on the second day of the national Central Committee meeting of February 6th and 7th, which was attended by provincial delegates, as well as the officials of the London District Committee, comrade Healy stated that he was resigning from the organisation and joining the ILP on the following day; his action was not motivated by political differences but his personal inability to continue further work in our organisation with J. Haston, M. Lee and E. Grant.

He then left the meeting and was thereupon unanimously expelled from WIL by the Central Committee.

The same afternoon he discussed the question of entering the ILP with two leading London [ILP] members, who imparted the information to Fenner Brockway.

His action came as a complete surprise to the Central Committee since he had not intimated his intentions in the course of the previous sitting of the CC or in his industrial report. While many of the comrades present witnessed this scene for the first time, the majority of London CC members had witnessed a similar occurrence on numerous occasions since the beginning of 1939. In the first stages of these ultimatums in the form of “resignations” from our organisation, there was no political issue whatsoever bound up with his actions. But in the latter stages it was usually linked up to political issues which were the subject of controversy between the EC, the PB and G. Healy.

The first “resignation” was made to the organisation when Youth for Socialism was, for purely technical reasons, changed from a duplicated journal to a printed one at the beginning of 1939. Comrade Healy, who was then the formal publisher of Youth for Socialism, took strong objection because the decision had been taken in his absence! Later, in 1939, he again “resigned” on a similar insignificant issue on the same basis of personal pique.

At the end of 1939 when he was in Eire as a member of a delegation of comrades sent there by our centre, as the result of a controversy over secondary tactical issues relating to local activity, he “resigned” from the local and stated that he intended to join the Irish Labour Party to fight our organisation. For this action he was expelled by the Irish group. After some discussion between the national organiser and G. Healy, and between the NC and the Irish group, it was conceded that he be sent back to England without the publicity of denouncing him before the organisation as a whole, and thus make it possible to utilise his energy in the interest of our party in Britain.

In 1940, the first really serious breach came when his “resignation” was linked to a political issue. At that time, comrade Healy, who was then the representative of the EC in the capacity of national organiser, was in Scotland. The constitution of the organisation had been redrafted by the EC with the object of bringing the statutes of the organisation into line with its development from a London local into a national organisation. As a representative of the EC he was responsible for EC policy. Having any differences with the body that elected him, it was his elementary duty to raise such differences with that body, and failing satisfaction, then taking the question up with the membership. Instead of conducting himself as a responsible official and discussing his differences with the EC, he pressed forward a series of amendments to the constitution through a number of locals with which he had close contact in his capacity as national organiser. These amendments were of an opportunist character, reducing the constitution to a federal, instead of a centralised basis. When called upon by the EC to defend his policy, he failed to put up any defence whatsoever, but instead launched a slanderous and personal attack upon two of the leading comrades in the centre and “resigned” from the organisation, because of his inability to work with these comrades.

In the last instance, comrade Healy’s industrial report was to have been the subject of criticism and there is no doubt that his action was bound up with that question. Although he was invited to remain in the meeting for the political discussion on the industrial work, he refused to do this, but stated he could not work with the comrades mentioned.

On three other occasions a similar situation arose when the CC was presented with “resignations” arising out of insignificant issues.

During this period the EC made every concession to him, despite these continued disruptive acts. On each occasion, discussions were held with him in which the error of this type of ultimatum was demonstrated. During the whole of this period, the EC refrained from publicly branding these actions for what they were – crass irresponsibility – thereby allowing him to maintain a measure of

authority in the organisation and afford him the possibility of continued activity in the organisation and afford him the possibility of continued activity in our ranks. This was done because it was believed that his undoubted organisational energy and ability could be harnessed in the interests of our party and that these concessions were to the benefit of both comrade Healy personally as well as of our organisation as a whole.

The final resignation however, was the “last straw”. This was particularly true, since it took place at a national Central Committee meeting. The immediate effect of his actions was one of revulsion and indignation among the provincial members and DC delegates and the outcome was to partially disrupt the work of the CC, forcing it to readjust former decisions of an organisational character. It was in these circumstances that the CC took the decision that it was now no longer possible to make concessions: the time had come to take decisive action.

Our organisation is no longer a small body with no real public activity, but a nationally growing Bolshevik organisation whose members as a whole, and in particular its leading members must conduct themselves as revolutionaries.

At the worst, this latest action was a fundamental break with Bolshevism along the road of personal opportunism and consequent political degeneration; at the best it was light-minded irresponsibility which could not be tolerated in our party, in particular on its leading body in the present circumstances.

The decision of the Central Committee was unanimous.

PB, February 15 1943

## Correspondence February - June 1943

### Ted Grant to the RSL

London, February 19 1943

RSL

Dear comrade,

We have received today a copy of your Criticism of "Preparing for power", which we will answer as soon as possible and will let you have copies for your members.

This is the only copy we have received of this document and we would like a statement from you as to whether you have delivered a bundle to us. We would appreciate a few more copies if this is possible.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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## Ted Grant to Jimmy Deane

London, March 4 1943

Dear Jim,

We are not at all clear on your position at the moment. If it would be possible to get a transfer to Glasgow, in our opinion that would be the best thing for the national organisation. If, on the other hand you can manage to get fixed up in your area, that will be all to the good. However if you can hang on until the next Central Committee meeting which takes place April 3rd and 4th (please do not forget) then we can discuss the position fully.

Re the statement on GH. I believe you have taken an incorrect position on this question. In relation to the statement issued by the PB, this was a moderate and objective outline of GH's position. Had the PB desired to do so they could have presented a far more damning case against GH. With regard to the political position, no one would suggest that on every question which was discussed GH took a "personal" position. It is difficult in such cases to decide where the personal ends and the political begins, but always in such cases the criterion is not at all the people on either side, but the political question. Your reference to the military policy, for example, has nothing whatsoever to do with the question of the expulsion or of the outline. The outline is merely a characterisation of GH as a disloyal and irresponsible egotist. It is impossible at a certain stage to tolerate such actions. At the CC we attempted to get GH to explain the reasons for such an action. He refused to do so and insisted upon leaving the meeting and the organisation. While in the past it might have been a question of weighing up the gain for the organisation through GH's activity on the one hand, and the loss through his irresponsibility on the other, with the emphasis on the former, such a

position is no longer possible. The group is in an entirely different position today. It is now a national organisation with national responsibilities and must conduct itself as such. Especially is this so for the leading members. The youngest member of the organisation would have been expelled for a disloyal position in joining the ILP. If this can be done in a period of calm what reliance could be placed on such a comrade in a period of crisis? It is not at all a question of any personal antagonism. It was a question of the whole of the CC and the whole of the PB taking a stand on this matter.

On the question of the constitution. The fact you raise that GH demonstrated the correctness of the constitution is beside the point. What is important was the way GH attempted to raise an opposition by influencing branches such as Glasgow and Liverpool, etc., behind the backs of the EC, without first consulting the EC and raising his objections and discussing the question, and then if he did not receive satisfaction, raising these openly in front of the membership.

As it was, when confronted by the EC on his return to London from the provinces he did not defend his position and immediately resigned from the organisation. We spent a day and night with him discussing the error of his ways. But a time must be reached when we call a halt! Our leniency with GH is indicated by the fact that even on this occasion no action was taken against him, in that you yourself knew nothing of it until now.

It is no accident that GH should have behaved in this way. His whole outlook over a period of years has been dominated by subjective motivations. As you know very well no one on the PB or CC has any personal axe to grind against GH. The whole CC was concerned merely with an objective analysis of the situation. In fact the ones most insistent upon expulsion were those who had had little dealings with GH.

But to allow the whole work of the CC to be disrupted every few months is an intolerable position. While it remained merely a question of irresponsible



behaviour on small committees and in a small organisation, the issue was not so important, but GH himself raised it before the membership by exploding quite unexpectedly his bombshell. It is unfortunate that you were not present to view this yourself, otherwise your views might be different.

It is of the utmost importance that GH refused to put his case, stamped out of the CC and immediately hastened to inform ILPers of his position. This was before he knew the organisation had expelled him, thus demonstrating the correctness of the decision of the CC.

It is perfectly true that mistakes have been [made], and will be made by everyone in the organisation. It is true also that personal differences will play their part in all organisations including ours, and should be ironed out. It is correct that a comrade should never be expelled whatever the personal differences so long as he agrees politically, but the one unforgivable crime is disloyalty and irresponsibility against the party. Loyalty to the organisation is the first rule of all politics, and this more for leading comrades than for the rank and file. In conclusion I would point out that once GH himself had raised the question before the whole membership – and this he did by raising it in front of the CC – it was the duty of this body as a responsible leadership to make a statement to the whole organisation. Not to have done so would have been light-minded. GH's position was not only irresponsible, but criminally irresponsible.

On the last point you raise: GH made no attempt to defend his position at the Monday meeting. The statement issued was on the lines of the statement to the organisation. He agreed that the CC was justified in expelling him because of his indefensible position and actions. Incidentally his real disloyalty was shown by the fact that he swore "on his revolutionary honour" that it was a lie that he had threatened to join the RSL and the ILP in the past, an oath that was immediately proved false.

On the Irish question; we are enclosing copies of letters sent by Neill, and of

letters we have sent to Dublin. This should give you a good idea of the position.

On the question of workers' control. Piper's resolution is being discussed by the Industrial Committee and we will send you a full report together with the decision as soon as possible.

Re. the points you raise for discussion on the local organisation and advice on the question; I think that you are tackling the matter in a determined way at the moment and would prefer to discuss the question with you next month.

The important issue you raise in your letter of the 9th February is on industrial unionism, and the programme of the committee published in the Socialist Appeal.

First I would point out that it was a Case of type-setting errors in the actual programme. The sub-heading should of course be, "Mobilisation of the masses for minimum demands". Demand 6 is also a typographical error, and should read "Area and national workers' councils".

I would agree that you make a good point on the necessity for much more attention to be paid to the question of youth in our programme, instead of leaving youth and women to be dealt with in point 5. The problem of youth will assume a tremendous importance in the next few years, especially in the post-war period, but at the moment because of the fact that most of the best youths have been called into the army unfortunately the issue does not reveal itself to us as sharply as it should. Probably the 1941 programme that you suggest would form a basis, although as I have not this to hand I can only agree to this from memory and not from a re-examination of the material. The points you raise are most interesting and deal with the necessity of a dialectical approach to the problems facing the working class. We must condemn the fetish of industrial

unionism which is mouthed by the ILP, in particular Padley and other sectarians, as a panacea for all evils. As you justly point out this is to hark back to pre-World War One for an ideological and political position in matters of tactics and organisation of the workers.

The basic error of the sectarians of the ILP, etc., on this question is not to examine the problem from the point of view of the actual development of the class struggle and the workers' movement but to put forward forms of an "ideal" character which should be imposed on the workers' movement rather than to take the movement as in its dialectical development and thus lead it to a higher consciousness. In this connection it might be remarked that even in 1900-1912, at the time of the blossoming of sectarianism both in Britain and America of the SLP variety[8], their method of presenting the case and fighting for industrial unionism was incorrect. Since that time we have had the experience of two world wars, the Russian revolution, and all the great events which have taken place in the last decades. Basing ourselves on this we can confidently predict, as you say, that long before the workers will arrive at the "ideal" form of trade union organisation (i.e. industrial organisation) the revolution will be on the order of the day and factories and workers' committees will take the place, not merely of these fairy fancies of Padley and Co., but for the matter of that, very likely of the trade unions themselves.

With regard to this we would remark that the fact that factory committees and soviets – and what form these will take we cannot say definitely in advance – will be set up in the next period ahead does not prevent us from developing the idea of capturing the unions and transforming them into fighting organisations of the working class with a programme of militant struggle and workers' power. This is not likely to be realised because of our weakness and the rapid development of events, though it is not impossible that we might capture some national unions. Long before this, as the most likely course of events, the struggle would have burst forth into the arena of a fight for power.

But this does not at all mean that we do not continue to work in the unions

putting forward the objectively correct idea of capturing the leadership and transforming even the most reactionary of unions. Thus there is no contradiction between the two ideas, the problem is solved by the development of events themselves.

When you say that industrial unionism for America is a burning issue and one that immediately affects the workers this is correct and that is why it plays a part as a topical and practical issue for our American comrades. It would be impossible to organise the workers in the mass production industries in America except on an industrial basis. That is why the ossified and bureaucratic American Federation of Labor representing the upper strata of the workers could not carry out this progressive task and indeed opposed it tooth and nail. Standing in the way they had to be pushed aside when the workers organised on an industrial basis. Industrial unionism was not merely a propaganda slogan in the USA in the last period, but a direct question of agitation and practical action on the part of the masses.

In Britain the situation is entirely different. It is true that the top bureaucracy is little better than that of the AF of L, although not quite so corrupt and degenerate. This of course because of the pressure of the workers who are far more conscious than the workers in America at the present stage. Our main attention in our industrial work should of course be in the union branches [in the] factories, and shop-stewards' committees. It will be directed – and this will assume more and more importance in the coming period as our successes among the miners have demonstrated – [at] the replacement of the top apparatus from the top to bottom, the election for periods of not more than 3 years of the officials, these to be under the direct control of the membership, and of course that no official should receive the inflated wages that they are doing at the present time.

This also is not at all in contradiction with our general ideas and perspectives of the development of events as outlined in the transitional programme. It is significant that the Old Man should link up the question of work in the unions

while at the same time pointing out the limitations of the unions and the inevitable formation of factory and ad hoc committees during the course of the struggle. These two are not at all contradictory if we examine the dialectic of the process itself.

In the sense of a living slogan to be immediately applied you are correct when you say that the slogan of industrial unionism is “out of date”. As an agitation issue it has no importance at the present time. As a propaganda slogan it preserves a certain importance; in that sense we cannot drop the slogan of industrial unionism; it remains a broad educational slogan for militant workers. It would be to fall into a pedantic position to reject completely this slogan because of the sectarian and senseless use which is made of it by the ILP and others. So in that sense as a means of exposing the vested interests of the bureaucrats in the unions who organise on that basis it can still be used.

Therefore we can still retain it in a broad programme, though not as an immediate issue, and though it will recede into the past as even perhaps will the capture of the old unions themselves at the time of the revolution.

After the war, of course, unions will be re-organised on an individual basis. Incidentally it will be of interest to you that the perspectives of this committee have been thrashed out and the resolution adopted by the industrial committee and the PB on this question will be sent to you. In fact it was this that precipitated the resignation of GH. On the first evening of the CC he attempted to get the minutes altered to conceal his ultra-left point of view of the last CC.

When GH realised that the question was coming up for discussion and he had made a bad blunder, rather than face this discussion, he resigned. In fact that has been the “personal-political” basis of his disagreements in the past.

On the question of workers' control, literature on this is very meagre but you will find quite a lot of material in Lenin's works of 1917. Felix Morrow's material on what took place in Spain should be of some use, and I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, there was some material on this in the old minority movement.

Ask IP if he has any material relating to this. At the same time IP would be doing the organisation a great favour if he gave us some material on the minority movement and the general strike of 1926.

In conclusion if I have not made myself clear please write again.

With warmest wishes,

Yours fraternally,

*Ted*

PS: I learn from Jock that he sent the Irish correspondence to you.

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**Ted Grant to RSL**

London, April 3 1943

Secretary, RSL [Handwritten: Please pass to D. D.]

Dear comrade,

Your letter of March 22 1943, as well as the two previous communications dated March 5 1943 from "SG", have been considered by our political bureau. In reply we wish to state that we in no way consider that the publication of the material relating to Starkey Jackson can be described either as "disgraceful" or as a "wicked trick", as you term it.

We do not share your view that the publication of Jackson's name and record may mean his death at the hands of the Nazis. Jackson was a known public figure in the British working class movement; the details of his public activity as published in the Socialist Appeal were already well-known, and insofar as there is any record of his activities in the hands of the Nazis or fascists, they will already have had it without our intervention. In any case, it would be impossible, generally speaking, to distinguish one Jackson from another, since there are probably many thousands of Jacksons in the British army today.

We consider it is of first class importance that sympathisers of the Fourth International should be made aware now, not after the war, when any of its leading figures fall in the line of battle.

Your attitude towards this question is consistent with your "illegal" and "secretive" methods by which you justify your lack of activity for, and in the interests of, our movement. You say: "We feel we must protest against your action in posting your reply to GH with the inscription on the envelope 'Please hand to RSL'. Considering your member's name and address are well-known, we think your action is entirely unwarranted." What is this but the most ridiculous form of boy-scout politics? Certainly not the action of serious

revolutionaries. First, you refuse to give us an address – then, when we address the material to one of our own members to be conveyed to you, you object. If the police are watching the correspondence at this address, the contents of the letter would indicate to whom it was addressed in any case. Surely this demonstrates the farcical nature of your objections.

In any event, the method of conducting our correspondence and discussions is completely unsatisfactory. We again propose to you to give us a public address to which we can address communications, and that you, in turn, address all correspondence to our official address in line with the procedure of all other working class organisations. If you object to writing to our offices, we will supply you with another address which shall be the recognised official address to which all material to our organisation shall be forwarded. We cannot be responsible for verbal or written communications addressed to us via any other source.

As the result of the “pipe-line” system of communication a great deal of confusion has arisen regarding the transit of your documents to our centre. On two occasions you have stated that you delivered bundles of 50 copies of your Criticism of “Preparing for Power”. The statement that 50 copies had been delivered to G. Healy, we understand was reiterated at your national conference, when the question of fusion discussions were raised. We must point out that comrade Healy denies ever having received these documents, and we fail to see what he would gain by saving them all for himself. He has always delivered any other material handed him by you. After your conference you delivered a further bundle of documents entitled Revolutionary Defeatism and not Criticism of “Preparing for Power”. To date we have received one copy of this latter document which was handed to us by comrade RC for which you received a written acknowledgment.

Had our suggestion for a joint bulletin been accepted at the initiation of these discussions, all the confusion and unnecessary duplication of work could have been avoided and the negotiations for fusion speeded up.



The answer to Criticism of “Preparing for power” is in the process of completion and you will receive this shortly.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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## **Report of visit of member of the Socialist Workers’ Party of America**

By Ted Grant

[WIL secretary circular to members, May 10 1943]

For members only

A member of the Socialist Workers’ Party, USA, paid us a visit on the weekend of May 3rd. He spent the day at the centre, discussing from 8 o’clock in the morning till 3 o’clock in the afternoon. From 3 till 8 pm he had discussions with members of the RSL. At 8:30 he addressed an impromptu meeting of our London members. He left us at 11 pm when he had to catch the train. Below is a report of the discussions.

He stated that the Socialist Appeal was eagerly awaited by the rank and file members of the SWP, who were proud to see the British Trotskyists coming out boldly against the bourgeois and the Stalinists, not holding back their punches in the present period of upsurge. What interested him, and impressed him, was the application of the transitional programme to industrial questions. He pointed to the fact that they were as yet not at the stage in the States where they could put forward the slogan of workers' control, but concentrated on day-to-day issues, struggle against the bureaucracy, for more democracy, etc. We discussed the question of production committees and our alternative position. It was clear to the American comrades that our industrial policy was meeting with some measure of response and success, and he asked many questions about the general state of industry throughout the country – the chaos, mismanagement, etc. He pointed out that in the States inefficiency had as yet not impressed itself upon the working class, as they were just passing through the first stage of the war; they would no doubt reach a similar situation to our own as war develops. Although this would not be exactly the same owing to the more advanced technique, etc. in America.

The military policy was discussed and there was complete accord on the position we advanced. He stated that there was no voice of opposition raised within the ranks of the SWP on the question of the military policy.

He read the statement of the RSL and our criticism, as well as their letter closing the discussion. He fully concurred with our criticism, in particular with the three outstanding questions of disagreement with the RSL: i.e., Labour to power as against the third Labour government; the military policy (he recognised that their failure to mention it in their paper was in fact a rejection of it); and workers' control of production.

In the afternoon he had discussions with eight members of the RSL who happened to be at the park. Of these, seven expressed disagreements with the RSL policy, as well as among themselves on the question of military policy,

Labour to power and workers' control of production. He spent most of the time attempting to convince them of the correctness of our policy. In reporting his discussions he was of the opinion that some of the RSLers could be "won over to our position".

The news went round like wildfire of the presence of an American comrade in our midst, and by 8 pm, thirty London members were waiting at the centre to meet him. He outlined the general position of the SWP, their activities, their influence, etc. Since the trial[9], they had become widely recognised as a force in the US; they had been enabled to address trade union meetings hitherto not open to our propaganda. Vincent Dunne[10] had just completed the most successful tour yet undertaken by the party. The party had 15 paid professionals in New York alone. The relationship between the Shachtman group[11] and the SWP was more or less on the same basis as between ourselves and the RSL – only along sharper lines. The large majority of the Militant were not sold but distributed; this was due to general backwardness of the American working class and was the practice of all working class organisations. On dealing with the question of the relationship between our organisation and the IS, he stated that the IS regarded us with extreme friendliness; he was delegated as an observer of the situation in Britain. He believed that he was regarded as a competent observer (he was at one time a paid organiser of the party and has close associations with the leaders of the SWP). From his observations our organisation and his were in the closest possible harmony in expounding the programme of the Fourth International. In fact our presentation of the transitional programme in the Socialist Appeal was perhaps the best in the international. Regarding the RSL, he was of the opinion that they were moving away from the Fourth International in their rejection of the most important transitional demands and their general incapacity to apply the transitional programme. He was not empowered to make a statement on what the future relations with the IS would be, but he assured us he would convey his full observations, of which he had made no secret – that is, that we were the organisation capable of playing a role in the coming period. He expressed gratification at the enthusiasm, energy and unified spirit of the organisation.

To sum up. This comrade was primarily and above all interested in political

differences and discussions. The official stamp of the RSL did not deter him from criticising that organisation. We gained the impression that he was specifically delegated to refrain from stating the attitude of the leaders of the SWP towards us – but merely to make observations for a report back. On the question of unity, he did not press for this. He merely stated that he was aware that this would be the easiest solution to the problem for the IS. He asked whether we could not afford to indulge in the “luxury” of unification. We made our position clear. We would undertake a unification only on a principled basis. We could not afford to embroil ourselves in bitter factional struggles in the period facing us. A unification would be acceptable to us only on the following conditions: acceptance of the three outstanding questions of difference – 1) the military policy; 2) our policy on production as expounded in the Socialist Appeal; 3) Labour to power. It was our desire to be recognised as the official section, but if necessary, we would continue on the present basis, in spite of the hindrance, rather than endanger our progress.

[E. Grant]

*Sec.*

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## **Ted Grant to RSL**

London, May 24 1943

To the secretary, RSL

Dear comrade,

The formal dissolution and burial of the Comintern is a magnificent confirmation of the ideas of comrade Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International. It introduces a new period in the relationship between the Trotskyists and left centrists, and inevitably opens up a widespread political discussion on the question of the “new” and the Fourth International.

In these new conditions and immediate perspectives, the tasks of the fourth internationalists is to close the ranks. The problem of a united Trotskyist movement assumes added importance for all who claim allegiance to the ideas, principles and methods of the Fourth International.

At our political bureau meeting of Sunday, May 23 1943, we resolved to urgently appeal to the RSL to agree to an immediate joint meeting of our Executives with the purpose of arranging the date of a unification conference of our two organisations, to be held within the next month.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary, WIL*

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**Ted Grant to IS**

London, June 3 1943

To the EC,

Dear comrade Loris,

The dissolution of the Comintern undoubtedly ushers in a new period for the left wing of the labour movement internationally, a period of discussions in which both “left” and right centrists, together with all manner of ultra-lefts, will fill the press with discussions about the “new” international, whilst ignoring the existence of the Fourth.

This places added importance to the status of our organisation and that of the other groups, as well as the question of the unification of the fourth internationalists in Great Britain.

It imposes the duty of a closer collaboration between yourselves and the English comrades and the duty to discuss with the English comrades questions of policy and tactics. Recently several “personal” letters have been received here from members of the American party, which are circulating throughout our membership for discussion[12]. We ask that these documents and the replies be circulated in the States as well. We would be pleased to have the opinions of the IS on the contents of these letters.

Enclosed you will find the copy of a letter sent to the EC of the RSL.

With fraternal greetings,

E. Grant

Secretary, WIL

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## **TO to WIL**

June 4 1943

To the EC, WIL

Dear comrades,

As you already know informally, fourteen members of the TO were expelled from the RSL. The comrades appealed to national conference which endorsed the expulsions. Following this decision, an appeal was made to the IS.

Since making this appeal, the TO has fused with the SWG[13]. The political and organisational basis of this fusion was outlined to you in a letter from the SWG some months ago and there is no need to reiterate it here.

The struggle against the expulsions and for reinstatement into the BSFI [British Section of the Fourth International] has been carried through by us in line with our adherence to the organisational principle of democratic centralism. It has been both complicated and protracted but is not unconnected with the struggle of

the TO to achieve a principled unification of the FI adherents in this country.

However, it was inevitable during this period that the attention of the TO should have been mainly focused on the struggle within the RSL. Despite a certain amount of joint work and discussion in some areas, it remains an unfortunate fact that relations between our two groups have, in the past few months, tended to deteriorate. For our part we are anxious to remedy this position. We therefore suggest a series of discussions both locally and centrally around the issue of unification. In such discussions we should attempt to explain the significance of our struggle within the RSL.

We take the opportunity of repeating here our readiness to cooperate with you in any work in which our comrades can be of assistance. In this respect we suggest a united action to cover the showing of the film called Mission to Moscow. We could discuss details – distribution of leaflets, etc. – as soon as a meeting is arranged between us. We do not know your plans but we should suggest that the RSL and other working class organisations be approached for united action on this issue.

With very best wishes,

Fraternally,

JL for the EC, TO

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**RSL to Ted Grant**

June 6 1943



Dear Grant,

Your letter of May 24 1943 has been received by us and I am instructed to reply to you as follows:

In the first place I have to point out to you that once again you start your letter with a lie – by heading it “Fourth International” despite the fact that you are not in the Fourth International.

Secondly I have to remind you that at the meeting between our representatives and yours which took place last year we made it quite clear to you that we are only prepared to agree to fusion with the two organisations provided agreement has been reached upon the most important issues facing the revolutionary movement in this country today. You have long had our documents making our position on these issues perfectly clear. At the joint meeting in question, you, personally, stated that replies to our document would be produced by you within a fortnight of their being received by you. In your letter of April 3 1943, you promised that your reply would be received by us “shortly”. We are still waiting for it.

The formal dissolution of the Comintern has indeed been a “magnificent confirmation of the ideas of comrade Trotsky and the Fourth International” – ideas in the formulation of which, incidentally, your organisation has never played any part. But we fail to see how this in any way changes the situation between our two organisations. It has always been the task of fourth internationalists to “close the ranks” and we are, as ever, in favour of this today. But organisational unity without political unity would achieve nothing but discord.

Consequently, we must reject the proposals for immediate organisational unity contained in your letter. If you really desire unity you will in future show more celerity in conducting your share of the political discussions which we have initiated.

Incidentally, it would be of interest to us to know why you are so much in favour of organisational unity with us today, when serious political differences exist, while you consistently rejected it in the days of 1938-1939 when no such differences existed. Do you consider that your then attitude was incorrect or is your present attitude, like your past, dictated by “clique” considerations – the differences being that you believe that now you could secure a majority in a united organisation, whereas previously this would not have been the case?

We note with surprise that you make no mention in your letter of our letter of May 7 1943. We trust that you received and should welcome your comments on it.

Yours fraternally,

*Secretary RSL (No signature)*

# **Reply of WIL to the RSL criticism of Preparing for power**

**By Ted Grant**

June 7 1943

The document issued by the RSL – A Criticism of the WIL pamphlet Preparing for power – places us in the unfortunate position of having to adopt an extremely sharp tone in answer to several points, whereas we would have preferred that the discussion remain entirely on the most comradely plane. For apart from the important differences with the political ideas expressed in the RSL criticism, we are forced to take up the question of method in polemics. The method adopted in the RSL criticism is alien to Bolshevism.

Despite this, however, there is sufficient material here to clarify our differences and effect a valuable education for all who do not wish to close their eyes and who do not seek to stifle the faculty of critical Marxist thinking.

In our reply we will attempt to re-establish and clarify the various terms such as chauvinism, revolutionary defeatism, etc., which our RSL comrades are so fond of bandying around, yet failing to understand the terms in their revolutionary essence.

In the introductory paragraph of their criticism, WIL is characterised as “an organisation, not moving politically in our direction, but moving away from us.”

Our friends of the RSL can only have arrived at this characterisation as the result of indulging in pipe dreams. Wishing to divorce themselves from reality, they find themselves expatiating, in an inverted form, the philosophy of Dr. Coué[14]: “WIL is moving way from the fourth... WIL is moving away from the Fourth...” But unfortunately the IS, recognising the hallucinations from which the RSL is suffering, wrote on June 21 1942:

“In our opinion your attitude towards the WIL is utterly false. Without ignoring personal differences inherited from the past, it is necessary to recognise that your false attitude flows directly from a false political appreciation of this group. You see in it a centrist group ‘moving away from us’. This is an opinion which we can by no means share.”

For our comrades of the RSL who believe that the IS is a serious body capable of correct political appreciation, this formula should place the discussion in its proper perspective.

## **Britain and the uneven development of capitalism**

In our opinion the document does not contain a single clear and principled idea which can be counterposed to the ideas set forth in our thesis. We are presented with a series of disconnected, eclectic and hair-splitting quibbles, which we cannot accept as having been honestly arrived at. Take the very first argument which is put forward:

“A basic defect of the WIL document lies in the complete omission of any real explanation for the decline of British imperialism and its defeats. The weakness of British imperialism lies in the fact that owing to the uneven development of capitalism, its accumulated imperialist booty is now out of proportion to the relation which its economic (and consequently, military) strength bears towards

that of rival imperialisms. Hence, it finds it difficult, or impossible to maintain its conquests unaided. Hence, therefore, its defeats and its forced reliance upon the USA. But according to the WIL document, everything is explained by ‘old school tie blimps’ in the colonial service and armed forces, whose stupidity and incompetence is but a reflection of the fact that the British bourgeois system has completely outlived itself and by the ‘enfeeblement and decline of the ruling class.’ It is true that we also read: ‘In reality the process of decline has been going on for many years before the war. The altering relationship of forces between the powers was bearing less and less relationship to Britain’s nominal position.’ But this ‘altering relationship of forces’ is apparently considered to be due to the ‘senility and decay of British imperialism’, the causes of which are unexplained, not to the fact that certain of its rivals have experienced a relatively more rapid rate of economic and military development. It is, of course, quite true that ‘the British bourgeois system has completely outlived itself’ but this is true of all bourgeois systems in this epoch of the general decline of imperialism. Even Britain’s rivals in this war are decaying. Thus the WIL give us no real reason for Britain’s defeats and difficulties and moreover, by stressing and exaggerating the weakness of Britain and ignoring those of her rivals, gives a totally false picture of the position.”

This statement is the measure of a bankrupt leadership. A child of ten reading the document *Preparing for power* could not wilfully misunderstand and misrepresent the ideas expressed in this way. We do not need the RSL to explain what is ABC to all Marxists – the law of uneven development of capitalism. Have the RSL forgotten that the law of uneven development has been the theoretical bag and baggage of the Stalinists for the last two decades in their polemics against the Marxists? A mere glance at the passages quoted would indicate that it is precisely on this law that our estimate of perspectives in Britain is based. Even though the thesis contained nothing else, only wilful misrepresentation could lead to such meaningless criticism. The section referred to is headed: *Britain’s decline as a world power* and in our next section we have this passage:

“Because of the super exploitation of the colonial masses the British imperialists were enabled to grant concessions to a privileged stratum of the British working

class, and even to a certain extent, to raise the level of the whole of the British workers above that of the European workers. Basing herself on this, Britain's industries became archaic and outdated, instead of advancing as in Germany and America, on the basis of modern technique. Hopelessly outmoded from a technical standpoint, she has been fighting on the shoulders of the colonies..."

Is this passage not based upon the law of uneven development and does it not explain the reasons for the changed position of British imperialism? Moreover, as the "objective scientists" the RSL is aiming its criticism in the wrong direction. Trotsky puts the responsibility for the defeat of France on the shoulders of Blum and Thorez... who saved French capitalism from destruction in the stay-in strikes in 1936! Their position gave French capitalism privileges, and foster sluggishness, etc.

But where is the method of dialectical materialism in the RSL criticism? Perfectly true, that world capitalism as a whole is declining and in its death agony. But in the thesis we are not discussing world imperialism as a whole, except as insofar as the world position affects Britain. It is precisely the unevenness of development of capitalism which has provoked the "senility and decay" of British capitalism. If Britain's world position has worsened due to technical superiority of Germany and America and her specific position as a world empire no longer corresponds to her weakened economic position, does this indicate a position of virility, youth and strength, even if we take the position of Britain in relation to her competitors? And does not this changed position have a reflection in the consciousness of all classes, including that of the ruling class? In their eagerness to find some "Marxist" criticism, the RSL have seized on some points without thinking out where their criticism would lead.

True, since the document was written, the military position of British imperialism has enormously improved. But this does not alter anything essential in the document itself. It is thanks mainly to the heroic defence of the Soviet Union by the masses and the terrific economic and military preparations of America, that this is so. As Trotsky expressed it, Britain in all fundamentals still

remains a base for the mightier imperialism of America. In any case, the objective process must have subjective results among the masses, and it is to this that we must devote attention.

## **Once again on fascism in Britain**

Before passing on to the “basic points” it is necessary that we deal with one or two of the more glaring errors. The RSL states:

“With regard to the section entitled The possibilities of fascism in Britain, we must suggest to the WIL that they are in error in stating that ‘Mosley could only come to power on the basis of German bayonets’. This suggests that the German bourgeoisie, if victorious, could set up a fascist regime here. This is false and in contradiction to the experiences which have taken place on the continent. Fascism cannot be imported in this way. All that the Germans could do would be to set up some form of Bonapartist regime. Actually the position of British fascism would be greatly weakened by such a conquest by German imperialism. But we, of course, realise that the WIL needs this picture of Mosley triumphing in order to provide a background for their policy of veiled support for the imperialist war.”

Our comrades of the RSL are really in too much haste to demonstrate the “chauvinism” of the WIL. And here in doing this, is where the RSL borders on methods more akin to Stalinism than to Trotskyism. Apparently, they have been reading, without absorbing, as we will attempt to show later on, the Old Man’s last article on fascism. But the WIL has no need to go to the RSL classes on this question either. The whole section of our thesis on fascism is precisely based on the Old Man’s ideas on this question. The section is directly aimed at providing the impossibility of fascism coming to power in Britain in the next period by German bayonets or by any other means.

In omitting the lines preceding the quotation they give, the RSL method savours of the “double book-keeping” method of which they have accused us. The preceding lines say:

“It can be seen therefore, that there can be no question of fascism in Britain in the period opening up.”

Does this suggest that we are using the Hitler bogey to cover up our “veiled support for the imperialist war”? The RSL needs precisely “this picture to provide a background” for false arguments against the WIL. The most amusing aspect of this accusation, made with such triumph against the WIL, is that it was precisely our organisation which had to explain the role of fascism and the conditions of its rise, in our criticism of the RSL. We would refer members of the RSL to our Reply to the political statement of the RSL, 1941. The RSL has apparently accepted the criticism, forgotten that it was made against the RSL, and now attempts to use it against us. This is what we said:

“On the order of the day is not fascism, but revolution... So it was in France, so it was in Spain. The revolution will come first. This, of course, is based on the perspective which is the most likely one – that Hitler does not succeed in occupying the British isles. If the German imperialists could do so, then the trend of events would be entirely different. But even in that event we could not speak of fascism in the Marxian sense of the term, but of a regime with no support among the population, resting entirely upon the support of foreign bayonets.”

But if it is any satisfaction to the “revolutionary” conscience of our RSL comrades, we say quite unequivocally: we would regard with horror a Nazi occupation of the British isles. But alas, we would regard in exactly the same way an Anglo-American occupation of Germany! And in this “chauvinism” we



find ourselves in very good company. The Old Man wrote about the fall of France as a catastrophe, not only for France, but for all Europe. If that is chauvinism, let the RSL make the most of it. But we must remind these comrades, while on the job, that they had better bear in mind the elementary rules of honesty in polemics. Distortions and hair-splitting serve to confuse, instead of to clarify the issues. The RSL leadership would be better advised in all future discussion, especially between those claiming to support the same tendency, to use scrupulously honest quotations and to cease being “unfair”, as the IS terms it.

In such haste were they to manufacture arguments that they did not even check up before embarking on irresponsible comments. They quote from us:

“Once the masses compare the glittering promises about ‘after the war’ [with what they are to compare them is not given – RSL], their indignation will rise to unprecedented heights and revolutionary explosions will result.”

In fact, the quotation should read:

“Once the masses compare the glittering promises about ‘after the war’, of which they are sceptical even today, their indignation will rise to unprecedented heights when confronted with reality.”

Lenin once remarked that a sectarian could make as many mistakes in two lines as would require a book to answer. It would be a waste of time to track down and answer all the quibbles, distortions and somewhat vulgar sneers of the RSL. But two points must be dealt with before attempting to go onto the broader issues raised. Writing on WIL’s position on entrism, the RSL says:

“While it is, of course, natural for centrists respectfully to observe the orientations of other centrists, to attempt to model their conduct upon them...”

We would ask the RSL whether it is not “natural” for Marxists to observe the orientation of centrists, reformists, and even fascists for that matter, in order to determine the movement of political opinion in one direction or another at any given period? But this without necessarily “modelling” their policy in the same direction. Perhaps the explanation of the position of the RSL leadership today is provided by their refusal as “intransigent revolutionaries” to bother themselves about the orientation of the working class.

The RSL’s efforts to manufacture a case against the policy of WIL leads them into making assertions which land them in a somewhat contradictory position. On the one hand they say:

“It is illuminating to observe that the perspective of workers’ conquest of power during the war is pushed right into the background by the WIL, indeed it is barely mentioned.”

On the other hand they say:

“For to justify this opportunism, to be able to cover it with a cloak of revolutionary phrases, the WIL has to paint its picture of the present situation in revolutionary colours, it has to speak as though it were on the eve of the seizure of power! And, with such a perspective, the Labour Party tactic not only cannot be used, but actually becomes a hindrance.”

“You pays yer money and you takes yer choice!” as the showman says.

Whatever may or may not be the policy of WIL it is obvious that it cannot be both of these.

## **Chauvinism and revolutionary defeatism**

The basic reason for the mistakes of the RSL lies in the fact that the leadership does not understand the revolutionary attitude towards the war. It is this which leads them to the sins against Marxism which they commit. Their position is summed up towards the end of their statement:

“In conclusion, we must state that the basis for all the main political mistakes of WIL is to be found in the defencist position it has adopted with regard to the imperialist war since the fall of France first made the defeat of British imperialism a real possibility. Defencism rarely shows itself in its open form especially in a left-centrist organisation. Concealment is especially necessary in an organisation still professing to stand upon the principles of revolutionary defeatism...”

An understanding of this confusion can be obtained by restating the fundamental position of Marxism on the question of war. If we take any of the writings of Lenin during the period of 1914-17, the issue can be clarified. In the little pamphlet *Socialism and war*, for example, we read the following:

“What is social chauvinism

“Social chauvinism is adherence to the idea of ‘defending the fatherland in the present war’. From this idea follows repudiation of the class struggle in war time, voting for military appropriations, etc. In practice the social chauvinists

conduct an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, because in practice they insist not on the 'defence of the fatherland' in the sense of fighting against the oppression of a foreign nation, but upon the 'right' of one or other of the 'great' nations to rob the colonies and oppress other peoples. The social-chauvinists repeat the bourgeois deception of the people, saying that the war is conducted for the defence of freedom and the existence of nations; thus they put themselves on the side of the bourgeois against the proletariat. To the social chauvinists belong those who justify and idealise the governments and the bourgeois of one of the belligerent group of nations, as well as those who, like Kautsky, recognise the equal rights of the socialists of all belligerent nations to 'defend the fatherland'. Social chauvinism, being in practice a defence of the privileges, prerogatives, robberies and violence of 'one's own' (or any other) imperialist bourgeoisie, is a total betrayal of all socialist convictions and a violation of the decisions of the international socialist congress in Basel." (Lenin, Collected Works, Volume 21, pp. 306-7)

It is clear from this single quotation that the RSL have failed to understand the essence of the meaning of chauvinism. How can any serious party or individual honestly claim that the above quotation characterises the policies and activities of WIL? Our fundamental international thesis War and the Fourth International explains:

“‘Defeatism’ and imperialist war

“In those cases where it is a question of conflict between capitalist countries, the proletariat of any one of them refuses categorically to sacrifice its historic interests, which in the final analysis coincide with the interests of the nation and humanity, for the sake of the military victory of the bourgeoisie. Lenin's formula: 'defeat is the lesser evil' means not that defeat of one's own country is the lesser evil as compared with the defeat of the enemy country; but that a military defeat resulting from the growth of the revolutionary movement is infinitely more beneficial to the proletariat and to the whole people than military victory assured by 'civil peace'. Karl Liebknecht gave an unsurpassed formula

of proletarian policy in time of war: ‘The chief enemy of the people is in its own country’.” (Leon Trotsky, War and the Fourth International, June 10 1934)

And indeed to pose the problem in any other way would be to become inverted chauvinists: that is, while not supporting the bourgeoisie of one’s own country, to fall into the objective position of supporting the bourgeoisie of the enemy country.

Here let us remark, that we have recollections of a document written by the same author of the present RSL document, which adopted precisely this false position, and which the RSL would prefer to forget.

In his last writings, which are undoubtedly among the finest he ever wrote, the Old Man gave the finest theoretical exposition of the Marxist-internationalist attitude to imperialist war in general, and the present imperialist war in particular. These fragments will remain for all time the classical exposition of the Marxist approach to the problem and of the dialectical method as a means for determining the policy of the revolutionary party. The readers will forgive us if we quote extensively both from Lenin and Trotsky to establish the position of Marxism on an unassailable basis. Trotsky presents the theoretical basis of our attitude towards the war thus:

“The present war, as we have stated on more than one occasion, is a continuation of the last war. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. As a general rule, a continuation signifies a development, a deepening, a sharpening. Our policy, the policy of the revolutionary proletariat towards the second imperialist war is a continuation of the policy elaborated during the last imperialist war, primarily under Lenin’s leadership. But a continuation does not signify a repetition. In this case too, continuation signifies a development, a deepening and a sharpening.

“We were caught unawares in 1914

“During the last war not only the proletariat as a whole but also its vanguard, and, in a certain sense, the vanguard of this vanguard was caught unawares. The elaboration of the principles of revolutionary policy toward the war began at a time when the war was already in full blaze and the military machine exercised unlimited rule. One year after the outbreak of the war the small revolutionary minority was still compelled to accommodate itself to a centrist majority at the Zimmerwald conference[15]. Prior to the February revolution and even afterwards, the revolutionary elements felt themselves to be not contenders for power but the extreme left opposition. Even Lenin relegated the socialist revolution to a more or less distant future...”

“In 1915 Lenin referred in his writings to revolutionary wars which the victorious proletariat would have to wage. But it was a question of an indefinite historical perspective and not of tomorrow’s task. The attention of the revolutionary wing was centred on the question of the defence of the capitalist fatherland. The revolutionists naturally replied to this question in the negative. This was entirely correct. But this purely negative answer served as the basis for propaganda and for training cadres but it could not win the masses who did not want a foreign conqueror.

“In Russia prior to the war the Bolsheviks constituted four-fifths of the proletarian vanguard, that is, of the workers participating in political life (newspapers, elections, etc.). Following the February revolution the unlimited rule passed into the hands of the defencists, the Mensheviks and the SRs. True enough, the Bolsheviks in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played not by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan: ‘All power to the soviets!’ And only by this revolutionary slogan! The criticism of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defence of bourgeois democracy and so on could never have conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to the side of the Bolsheviks.” (Leon Trotsky,

Bonapartism, fascism and war, unfinished article dictated by Trotsky just prior to his assassination, August 20 1940)

And following on this analysis, the basis is laid for the Marxist approach to the problems of the war today. The collapse and betrayal of the great parties of the Second International[16], by their support of the capitalist fatherland, came as a terrible shock and a great blow to the whole socialist movement. It was no accident, for example, that when Lenin in Switzerland received the issue of Vorwaerts, organ of the German Social Democracy, voting war credits to the Kaiser's government, he believed at first that it must have been a forgery of the German general staff. In this little episode is mirrored the confusion and disorientation of the revolutionary vanguard.

The internationalists of all countries remained as isolated individuals and groups, most of whom merely opposed the war in a confused pacifist and semi-pacifist way. As late as the middle of 1915, at the Zimmerwald conference, only a handful of delegates assembled. Yet even among this vanguard of the masses, confusion and lack of theoretical understanding of the war and of revolutionary policy were clearly displayed. The main task of Lenin during this period was not at all to win the masses to his banner, but to educate the vanguard, and even the vanguard of the vanguard. As Trotsky expresses it, Lenin had to concentrate his attention exclusively at this period on the question of "defence of the capitalist fatherland".

If we would examine all the extensive writings of Lenin from the beginning of the war to the outbreak of the February revolution, we would find that they concentrate on theoretical questions as to the nature of the war and the betrayal by the Second International of the international proletariat. Lenin's basic task was the struggle against what he characterised as social chauvinism and social opportunism. Lenin's role then was to demonstrate that the class struggle remains the basic law of class society in peace time as in war time. Luxemburg and Liebknecht in Germany, and in a confused way the ILP[17] pacifists and opposition groups in other countries all groped in the same direction. All at that

time conducted their work around the theoretical struggle on the question of the “defence of the fatherland”. So it was that even after the February revolution, this question occupied a predominant place. It is here that the confusion of the RSL on the question of “revolutionary defencism” arises.

Lenin would not tolerate the slightest concession to social patriotism and support of the bourgeoisie. After the overthrow of the Tsar, the Mensheviks and SRs became social patriots and supported the Russian bourgeoisie. Lenin condemned the position of Kamenev and Stalin who, in Pravda, came out in support of the provisional government, and in an unclear fashion even supported the war by saying that they would defend the bourgeois revolution against the attacks of the armies of the Kaiser. The revolutionary defencism which Lenin condemned was that of the Mensheviks and SRs who supported the war, who supported the capitalist state, and who supported the ruling class, as the method of defending the gains of the February revolution. By revolutionary defencism is meant no more, no less, than social chauvinism. Lenin’s speech to the delegates of the Bolshevik faction of the soviets clearly put the position:

“The masses approach this question not from the theoretical but from a practical viewpoint. Our mistake lies in our theoretical approach. The class conscious proletarian may consent to a revolutionary war that actually overthrows revolutionary defencism. Before the representatives of the soldiers the matter must be put in a practical way, otherwise nothing will come of it. We are not at all pacifists. The fundamental question is: which class is waging the war? The capitalist class, tied to the banks cannot wage any but an imperialist war. The working class can...” (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 20, p. 96, International Publishers, New York, 1929)

We must base ourselves on the Leninist attitude towards war. Such a position serves for propaganda purposes and educates cadres. But how to win the masses?



Let us take an example from another sphere in which the Marxian attitude has been worked out theoretically and demonstrated practically. Marxism has demonstrated the superiority of the Soviet system to Parliamentarism. But the position of the anti-parliamentarians, basing themselves on this correct idea, is hopelessly sectarian. It is necessary to lay this down theoretically, but in our day-to-day agitation we still conduct our work through Parliamentary elections and convince the masses by their own experience of our point of view; not by the mere repetition, parrot-fashion, that soviets are the sole means of salvation for the working class.

The mistakes of the RSL are of the same character. Trotsky throws a penetrating light on one of the most important reasons for the impotence of the revolutionary left during the last war. Trotsky has emphasised better than anyone else the outlived character of the national state and its reactionary role in our epoch. Our attitude is based on that criterion. Our opposition towards war waged by imperialist states lies precisely on their outmoded character and the fact that support for any imperialism cannot assist the development of the productive forces – on which all human progress depends.

From this stems the profoundly dialectical approach of Trotsky to the problems of the revolutionary movement in the last war. Russia was the country where the proletariat was freshest and most revolutionary. Bolshevism had conquered the overwhelming majority of the organised and politically awakened workers before the commencement of the last war. On the eve of the war, barricades were already appearing on the streets of St. Petersburg. Yet in the first period of the war the Bolsheviks were smashed by police repression without protest on the part of the masses, and even sections of the workers participated in patriotic demonstrations in favour of the Tsar. The war weariness and disillusionment of the masses led to the February revolution. Yet despite the traditions of Bolshevism within Russia, the Mensheviks and SRs gained overwhelming preponderance among the masses, including the workers. The war weary masses placed in power, not those who consistently opposed the war, but social chauvinists!

In Germany, where Liebknecht and Luxemburg conducted an internationalist opposition to the war, the German revolution placed the rotten Social Democracy and not at all the Spartacists[18] in power. Yet the socialist traitors had supported the Kaiser and the imperialist war to the limit and even figured in the cabinet of his government. The social democrats fought and opposed the revolution with all their strength and even attempted to save the monarchy. Yet by the irony of history they usurped the power in the revolution.

In Britain where the Labour leaders were supporting the war as members of His Majesty's government, the radicalisation and revolutionary upsurge of the British workers saw a tremendous increase in the support and influence of the Labour Party. The revolutionary international remained isolated from the working class – this despite the disillusionment of the masses of the people in the war and its results.

In all other countries the same phenomenon can be observed. One of the reasons for this (of course there are other fundamental reasons into which we cannot enter here) was precisely the issue which Trotsky raises. The correct criticism by the internationalists (by itself), “of imperialism, its militarism, the renunciation of the defence of bourgeois democracy, and so on, could never have conquered the overwhelming majority of the people to...their side.”

It has been shown that the attention of the revolutionary vanguard was concentrated on the renunciation of the defence of the capitalist fatherland. This could not be a basis to win the masses who do not want a foreign conqueror. “True enough,” Trotsky wrote, “the Bolsheviki in the space of eight months conquered the overwhelming majority of the workers. But the decisive role in this conquest was played not by the refusal to defend the bourgeois fatherland but by the slogan ‘All power to the soviets!’ And only by this revolutionary slogan!”

An examination of the Bolshevik agitation in the period between February and

October demonstrates this irrefutably. Not only this. If we examine Lenin's approach to the masses on the question of the war before February 1917, and after, there is a striking difference. In the first period as we have shown, it is purely of an oppositional character; in the second, the period of revolution, all agitation and for that matter, propaganda and theory, is directed towards the goal of the seizure of power. With the imminence of the goal before him, Lenin links up the question of the war with the problem of which class possesses power. In this he is not at all contradicting his stand during the early period of the war, and in fact remains watchful that the leadership of the Bolsheviks does not stray from the internationalist position. But now, from theoretical clarification, he is carrying the policy into action. From training the cadres, he is advancing towards the solution of the problem of winning the broad masses. In both positions he remains true to the stand of Marxism. There is no need to quote extensively for this.

The RSL has stated (quite incorrectly) that the WIL bases its agitation on the war on Lenin's Threatening catastrophe[19]. However, this pamphlet itself is an annihilating reply to the sectarian criticism of Trotskyism and its attitude towards the war. In attempting to dodge the issue the RSL states: "In practice the WIL claim that, for instance, Lenin's remarks on the 'threatening catastrophe' (written on the eve of the seizure of power!) apply today, and such is the basis of their propaganda." We might draw the attention of the leadership of the RSL to the fact that even if we did base ourselves on the perspective of the immediate seizure of power, it solves nothing of the question of whether or not we are chauvinist. It would indicate only, in the worst event an error of perspective.

The fact that Lenin wrote on the eve of the seizure of power could not excuse him – if he were guilty of chauvinism. Nor would it excuse the WIL today. Twenty five years after they are willing to forgive Lenin his "chauvinism" because it led to the successful revolution, but without having learned that had Lenin adopted their method, there would have been no revolution. In our view, chauvinism "on the eve of the seizure of power" would be a hundred times more unpardonable than at any other time. However, let us examine what Lenin really did say. In Threatening catastrophe, under the section, The war and the fight against economic ruin:

“All the above measures of fighting the catastrophe would, as we have already pointed out, immeasurably strengthen the defensive power or, in other words, the military strength of the country. This on the one hand. On the other hand these measures cannot be introduced without transforming the predatory war into a just war, without transforming the war waged by the capitalists in the interests of the capitalists into a war waged by the proletariat in the interests of all the toilers and exploited.”

And again:

“It is impossible to lead the masses into a robbers’ war in accordance with secret treaties and still expect them to show enthusiasm. The foremost class of revolutionary Russia, the proletariat, realises ever more clearly the criminal character of the war, while the bourgeoisie not only has failed to shatter this conviction of the masses, but on the contrary, the consciousness of the criminal character of the war is growing. The proletariat of both capitals of Russia has become definitely internationalist.

“How can anyone talk about mass enthusiasm here in favour of the war? One thing is inseparably bound up with the other; internal politics with foreign politics. It is impossible to render the country capable of defending itself without the greatest of heroism on the part of the people in courageously and decisively carrying out great economic transformations. And it is impossible to appeal to the heroism of the masses without breaking with imperialism, without offering to all the peoples a democratic peace, without thus transforming the war from a war of conquest, a predatory criminal war, into a just, defensive, revolutionary war.”

The most ignorant and confused peasant would be able to understand this. The RSL triumphantly exclaims, as if it had discovered a crime:

“...their [WIL] slogan, nowhere explicitly stated in the document it is true, but implicit in it and in their other propaganda is ‘turn the imperialist war into a workers’ anti-fascist war’. In other words their main attack is directed not against the British bourgeoisie, but its rivals, the fascist regimes.”

If the argument contained in the first part of this “charge” can be levelled against us, then it applies a hundred times more to Lenin... because Lenin’s propaganda for changing the imperialist war into a workers’ war is not implicit, but explicitly stated. In any event, how can the war be changed into an anti-fascist war without the workers having conquered power? So far as we are concerned, we prefer to remain in the “chauvinist” company of Lenin. The latter part of this criticism, that our “main attack is directed against the fascist regimes” is absolutely false and cannot honestly be held by anyone who reads our press and documents.

On the question of slogans too, Lenin answered the RSL long in advance. They complain that WIL does not raise the slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war, though the WIL has proclaimed often enough that it stands on the principles and methods of the Fourth International. It would be nothing short of lunacy to raise this as an agitational slogan in the period ahead. As senseless as raising the slogan of the insurrection for the week after next. There is a time and a place for every slogan. Just think, in the middle of the revolution, Lenin proclaims:

“To speak of civil war before people have come to realise the need of it, is undoubtedly to fall into Blanquism[20].” (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 236)

And to give some advice that ultra-lefts would be wise to pay some attention to:

“It happens only too often that, when history makes a sharp turn, even the most advanced parties cannot get used to the revolutionary situation for some time, and repeat slogans that were correct yesterday, but have no more meaning today, having lost it as suddenly as the sharp turn in history ‘suddenly’ occurred.” (Lenin, On slogans, Collected Works, Vol. 25, p. 185)

At a certain stage in the revolution, Lenin even denounced those who claimed that he stood for civil war, quite correctly laying the responsibility on the shoulders of the bourgeoisie for anything of the sort:

“Is there anything more absurd and ridiculous than this fairy tale about our ‘fanning civil war’ when we have declared in the clearest, most formal and unequivocal language that the main burden of our work is the patient explaining of proletarian policy as opposed to the petty bourgeois defencist obsession of faith in the capitalists.” (Lenin, Mad capitalists or weak-minded social-democrats?, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p.207)

### **The conquest of power is the axis of our propaganda.**

Our policy in relation to the problems of the epoch remains on the granite foundation laid down by Lenin. Our attitude towards imperialist war remains that of irreconcilable opposition. We continue the traditions of Bolshevism. But in the epoch of the decline and disintegration of capitalism a continuation, as Trotsky points out, does not mean a mere repetition. In the quarter century that has passed, the objective conditions for the socialist revolution have reached maturity and the decay and disintegration of capitalism have revealed themselves in the abortive attempts at revolution on the part of the masses, in fascism, and now in the new imperialist war. All the objective conditions of the past epoch render the proletariat responsive to the posing of the problem of the conquest of power by the working class.

As distinct from 1914-18, the cadres of Bolshevism have been trained and educated in the Leninist approach towards imperialist war. The social-chauvinism on the part of the social democrats and the Stalinists was anticipated and predicted by the Trotskyists long in advance. The theoretical exposure of social chauvinism is not a live issue for Bolshevism today. We build and construct our party on the Leninist internationalist basis, not least on the fundamental question of war.

As Trotsky once pointed out, war and revolution are the fundamental test for the policy of all organisations. On both these questions we continue the Leninist tradition. But Marxism does not consist in the repetition of phrases and ideas, however correct these may be. Otherwise Lenin could not have developed and deepened the conceptions first formulated by Marx. And Trotsky could not have propounded the theory of the permanent revolution. If all that was required of revolutionaries was to repeat ad nauseam a few phrases and slogans taken from the great teachers of Marxism, the problem of the revolution would be simple indeed. The SPGB[21] would be super-Marxists instead of incurable sectarians. As Trotsky remarked of the ultra-lefts, every sectarian would be a master strategist. In the last analysis, the basic principles of Marxism, as developed theoretically by Marx himself, have remained the same for nearly a century. The task of his successors consists, not at all in repeating a few half-digested ideas, parrot fashion, but of using the method of Marxism and applying it correctly to the problems and tasks posed at a particular period.

It is now necessary to approach the problem of war, not only from its theoretical characterisation by Lenin, but [in the task] of winning the masses to the Leninist banner. For the past epoch the cadres of the Fourth International have been educated in the spirit of internationalism. We look at the war from the principled basis established by Lenin, but now from a more developed angle. We do not conduct our propaganda from the standpoint of analysing the nature of the defence of the capitalist fatherland alone but from the standpoint of the conquest of power by the working class and the defence of the proletarian fatherland.

As Trotsky posed the problem:

“That is why it would be doubly stupid to present a purely abstract pacifist position today; the feeling the masses have is that it is necessary to defend themselves. We must say ‘Roosevelt (or Willkie) says it is necessary to defend the country: good, only it must be our country, not that of the 60 families and their Wall Street’.” (Leon Trotsky, *Some questions on American problems*, August 7 1940)

Only hopeless formalists and sectarians, incapable of appreciating the revolutionary dynamic of Marxism, could see in this a chauvinist deviation or an abandonment of Leninism.

Our epoch is the epoch of wars and revolutions, militarism and super-militarism. To this epoch must correspond the policy and approach of the revolutionary party. War has come as a horrible retribution for the crimes of Stalinism and reformism. It came through the fact that the traitors in the workers' leadership frustrated the striving of the masses in the direction of the socialist revolution. It is a reflection of the blind alley in which imperialism finds itself, and of the historical ripeness and over-ripeness for the socialist revolution. The last world war was already an expression of that fact that on a world scale capitalism had fulfilled its historical mission. This objective fact leads rapidly to the subjective position where the masses of the workers are ripe for the posing of the problem of the socialist revolution, that is the problem of power. The events of the past epoch have left the working class with a psychology of frustration and bewilderment. They regarded with apprehension and horror the coming of the second blood bath in which they would expect nothing but suffering and misery. In this war, right from its inception, among the British workers, especially among the Labour workers, there has been an absence of hatred towards the German people. Even in America, where the masses are far less politically conscious than in Britain, in a recent Gallup poll, two thirds of the people interviewed differentiated between the German people and the Nazis on the



question of responsibility and punishment after the war. This, despite all the propaganda of the bourgeoisie. If this is the case in America, it is a hundred times more true of Britain.

It is perfectly true, however, that especially among the working class there is an unclear, but deep-seated hatred of Hitlerism and fascism. But with all due respect to the leadership of the RSL, this hatred is not reactionary and chauvinist but arises from a sound class instinct. True, it is being misused and distorted for reactionary imperialist ends by the bourgeoisie and Labour lackeys. But the task of revolutionaries consists in separating what is progressive and what is reactionary in their attitude: in winning away the workers from their Stalinist and Labour leaderships who misuse these progressive sentiments. And there is no other way than that mapped out by Trotsky in his last articles, of separating the workers from the exploiters on the question of war.

The decay and degeneration of British imperialism render the masses responsive to the posing by the revolutionaries of the problem of power: to the problem of which class holds the power. Every issue which arises must be posed from this angle. Our position towards war is no longer merely a policy of opposition, but is determined by the epoch in which we live, the epoch of socialist revolution. That is, as contenders for power. Only thus can we find an approach to the working class. On paper, and in the abstract, the RSL accepts the transitional programme as the basis for our work in the present period. Trotsky points out that the objective situation demands that our day-to-day work is linked through our transitional demands with the social revolution. This applies to all aspects of our work. The plunging of the world into war does not in the least demand a retreat from this position, but on the contrary gives it an even greater urgency. But the same theoretical conception which forms the basis of the Transitional programme[22] and dictates the strategical orientation of all our activists forms the basis of the strategical attitude towards war in the modern epoch.

War is part of the life of society at the present time and our programme of the conquest of power has to be based, not on peace, but on the conditions of

universal militarism and war. We may commiserate with the comrades of the RSL on this unfortunate deviation of history. But alas we were too weak to overthrow imperialism and must now pay the price. It was necessary (and, of course, it is still necessary) to educate the cadres of the Fourth International on the nature and meaning of social patriotism and Stalino-chauvinism and its relation towards the war. Who in Britain in the left wing has done this as vigorously as WIL? But we must go further. The transitional programme, if it has any meaning at all, is a bridge not only from the consciousness of the masses today to the road of the socialist revolution, but also for the isolated revolutionaries to the masses.

The RSL convinces itself of the superiority of its position over that of Stalinism and reformism. It comforts itself that it maintains the position of Lenin in the last war. This would be very good... if the RSL had understood the position of Lenin. However, for Trotsky and the inheritors of Bolshevism, we start (even if the RSL correctly interpreted Lenin, which it does not) where the RSL leadership finishes! We approach the problem of war from the angle of the imminence of the next period of the social revolution in Britain as well as other countries. The workers in Britain, as in America “do not want to be conquered by Hitler, and to those who say, ‘let us have a peace programme’ the workers will reply: ‘but Hitler does not want a peace programme’. Therefore we say, we will defend the United States [or Britain – EG] with a workers’ army with workers’ officers, and with a workers’ government, etc.” (Leon Trotsky, Some questions on American problems)

Those words of the Old Man are saturated through and through with the spirit of revolutionary Marxism, which, while uncompromisingly preserving its opposition towards the bourgeoisie, shows sympathy and understanding for the attitude of the rank and file worker and the problems which are running through his mind. No longer do we stop at the necessity to educate the vanguard as to the nature of the war and the refusal to defend the capitalist fatherland, but we go forward to win the working class for the conquest of power and the defence of the proletarian fatherland.

## **A petty bourgeois pacifist tendency**

The harping on the theme of “peace” runs like an ever recurring thread through the RSL document, and indeed, provides the key to the development of the RSL and their present position. Commenting on a sentence in Preparing for power, “The corruption and incompetence, industrially and militarily, raises sharply in the minds of the workers the question of the regime”, the RSL writes:

“There is no question of misunderstanding this sentence. It means that the workers are questioning the right of capitalism to continue as the system of this country. This before the workers have even begun to display a mass sentiment for peace, while they still support the imperialist war and are, in fact, anxious to see it more efficiently and offensively conducted.”

This recurring theme of “peace” indicates the hopelessly petit bourgeois position of the leadership of the RSL. And it does not rise accidentally either. It is the continuation and culmination of a whole series of mistakes on the question of the revolutionary attitude towards militarism and war. At the time when conscription was imposed in Britain a few months before the outbreak of the war, the RSL in the Militant[23] correctly condemned conscription for imperialist ends. But as a means of fighting against this they found themselves in the company of the Peace Pledge Union, the ILP and other pacifist and semi-pacifist bodies in advocating the futile, and from a revolutionary point of view, the dangerous policy of refusal to accept conscription into the militia. This at a time when it was obvious that the overwhelming majority of the workers would enter into the militia. In the Militant of June 1939, the RSL wrote, under the heading What to do:

“Conscription must be smashed! Demand that the TUC prepare a general strike. Demand that the Labour Party force a general election. Demand that the executive committee of your trade union instructs all its members of

conscription age to refuse to register, and defend them if they are prosecuted for refusing. Only by mass action can conscription be smashed!”

This revolutionary-sounding alternative had an entirely social pacifist orientation, characteristic of centrism and petty bourgeois socialism. From the standpoint of the traditional Leninist position it was a false general directive: and as the attitude towards conscription adopted by comrade Trotsky demonstrates, it was also false from the standpoint of modern Leninism-Trotskyism. It left the members and sympathisers of the RSL without the slightest directive on what to do when faced with the concrete position: register.

Indeed, so utopian was this that the directive to refuse to register was given, yet the members of the RSL registered. It is indeed somewhat embarrassing to even have to argue over such questions among people who claim to be supporters of Lenin. But as the RSL leaders seem to have a hankering for posing as defenders of “old fashioned” ideas, perhaps it will settle the matter if we give a good quotation from Lenin on this question. Incidentally, the revolutionary attitude on this issue goes way back to Marx, and even the old social democracy on the continent had a correct and revolutionary attitude when compared with that of the RSL:

“At the present time the whole of social life is being militarised. Imperialism is a fierce struggle of the great powers for the division and re-division of the world, therefore it must inevitably lead to further militarisation in all countries, even in the neutral and small countries. What will the proletarian women do against it? Only curse all war and everything military, only demand disarmament? The women of an oppressed class that is really revolutionary will never agree to play such a shameful role. They will say to their sons: ‘You will soon be big. You will be given a gun. Take it and learn to use it. The proletarians need this knowledge not to shoot your brothers, the workers of other countries, as they are doing in the present war, and as you are being advised to do by the traitors to socialism, but to fight the bourgeoisie of your own country, to put an end to exploitation, poverty and war, not by means of good intentions, but by a victory over the

bourgeoisie and by disarming them.’ ” (Lenin, The military programme of the proletarian revolution, Collected Works, Vol. 23, p. 82)

Immediately the war began, the RSL joined up in an unprincipled alliance with the pacifists in the “Socialist anti-war front”. Hardly had they recovered breath from the exertions in this direction than they immediately fell into an even worse petit-bourgeois pacifist position. At a time when both the Stalinists and the ILP came out with the slogan “Stop the war”, the RSL made haste to follow in the same pacifist strain. In one of the issues of the Militant this was blazoned as the main headline! There is no need to polemicise against this position today, as events drove it into oblivion. Not even the RSL, which dropped this slogan without explanation, would argue in its favour now. In fact even the centrists of the ILP would not do so.

From this error, the RSL leadership naturally and automatically slid into the next. The Executive Committee of the RSL issued a special statement repudiating the section of the Manifesto of the Fourth International – Imperialist war and the world revolution, 1940, under the heading Workers must learn the military arts, as being inapplicable to Britain. In private the leaders of the RSL pooh-poohed the idea that comrade Trotsky could have been the author of such “chauvinist” statements, which corresponded to the WIL’s position. This is what they said:

“Under the heading Workers must learn the military arts, the Manifesto demands that the state immediately provide the workers and the unemployed with the possibility of learning how to use arms. This might be construed by some as support for the opportunist demand put forward by certain organisations in this country for the arming of the workers. The slogan ‘Arm the workers’ put forward in a belligerent country at a time when the masses are at a white heat of patriotism and in immediate fear of invasion is purely defencist and patriotic in character. The masses at such a time desire arms in order to repel the invader, i.e. in order to defend their ‘own’ capitalist state. Such a slogan is used by the imperialists for recruiting purposes... The British Section therefore states that

the demand in the international manifesto has no validity in the existing conditions in this country...”

Their position on this question flowed from the incorrect policy they held previously on the question of conscription. And finally, as the culminating point of this whole process, they finish up with the position of... peace in the present period! Well might an ordinary worker retort to such a position: “They say ‘peace, peace,’ and there is no peace!” Lenin undoubtedly pointed out the necessity to utilise at a certain stage the desire of the masses for peace. But in the very quotation given by the RSL he pointed out that such a position had nothing in common with pacifism. The RSL’s position, on the contrary, is pacifist and has nothing in common with Leninism. All Lenin’s writings on this question were aimed not only against the social patriots, but also against those who toyed with the slogan of peace without reference to time and place and the conditions under which peace could be obtained:

“We do not want a separate peace with Germany, we want a peace among all peoples, we want the victory of the workers of all countries over the capitalists of all countries.” (Lenin, To the soldiers and sailors, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 125)

“The slogan ‘Down with the war!’ is correct, to be sure, but it does not take into account the peculiarity of the tasks of the moment, the necessity to approach the masses in a different way. It reminds me of another slogan, ‘Down with the Tsar!’, with which an inexperienced agitator of the ‘good old days’ went directly and simply to the village – to be beaten up. Those from the masses who are for revolutionary defencism are sincere not in a personal but in a class sense, i.e. they belong to such classes (workers and poor peasants) as really gain nothing from annexations and the strangling of other peoples. They are quite different from the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia who know very well that it is impossible to give up annexations without giving up the rule of capital, and who unscrupulously deceive the masses with beautiful phrases, with no end of promises, no end of assurances.

“The average person who favours revolutionary defencism looks upon the thing in a simple matter-of-fact way: ‘I for one, do not want any annexations, but the Germans are “going for” me, that means that I am defending a just cause and not any imperialist interests.’ To a man like this it must be explained very patiently that it is not a question of his personal wishes, but of mass, class, political relationships and conditions, of the connection between the war and the interests of capital, the war and the international network of banks etc. Only such a struggle against defencism is serious and promises success, perhaps not very quick, but real and durable.

“The war cannot be ended ‘at will’. It cannot be ended by the decision of one side. It cannot be ended by ‘sticking the bayonet into the ground’, to use the expression of a soldier defencist.” (Lenin, The tasks of the proletariat in our revolution, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 65)

Lenin defines the position on war further:

“To terminate the war in a pacifist manner is sheer Utopia. It may be terminated by an imperialist peace. But the masses do not want such a peace. War is a continuation of the policies of a class; to change the character of the war, one must change the class in power.” (Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 24, p. 150)

This clear and simple position constitutes an annihilating reply to the position of the RSL on peace. In following all the major errors of the leadership of the RSL during the last few years on this question, there is revealed indubitably the existence of a petit-bourgeois pacifist or semi-pacifist tendency. But the quantity of the mistakes develops into a new quality. The RSL leadership is now revealing a fundamental breach with the ideas and methods of Leninism, with the ideas and methods of the Fourth International. Trotsky answered this particular argument on “peace” for us in his criticism of Shachtman[24] in

August 1940:

“We should understand that the life of this society, politics, everything, will be based on war, therefore the revolutionary programme must also be based on war. We cannot oppose the fact of the war with wishful thinking; with pious pacifism. We must place ourselves upon the arena created by this society. The arena is terrible – it is war – but inasmuch as we are weak and incapable of taking the fate of society into our hands; inasmuch as the ruling class is strong enough to impose upon us this war, we are obliged to accept this basis for our activity.

“‘Programme for peace’ is not serious

“I read in a short report of a discussion that Shachtman had with a professor in Michigan, and Shachtman formulated this idea: ‘let us have a programme for peace, not war; for the masses not for murder,’ etc. What does this mean? If we do not have peace, we cannot have a programme for peace. If we have war, we must have a programme for war, and the bourgeoisie cannot help but organise the war. Neither Roosevelt nor Willkie[25] are free to decide; they must prepare the war, and when they have prepared it they will conduct it. They will say they cannot do otherwise, because of the danger of Hitler, etc., of the danger from Japan, etc.

“There is only one way of avoiding the war – that is the overthrow of this society. However, we are too weak for this task, the war is inevitable. The question then, for us, is not the same as in the bourgeois salon – ‘Let us write an article on peace, etc.’, which is suitable for publications like The Nation. Our people must consider it seriously; we must say: the war is inevitable, so let us have an organised workers’ programme for the war. The draft of the youth is part of the war and becomes part of the programme.” (Trotsky, Some questions on American problems)



Comrades of the RSL, there is nothing chauvinist in this! It is the revolutionary internationalist and Marxist approach to war and the militarism of our epoch. It is not at all excluded that at a certain stage, there will arise a mass feeling for peace resulting from the mass slaughter, stalemate on the military fronts, the suffering of the masses reaching an unbearable intensity. However, even if this arises, our approach would still have nothing in common with the pacifist position of the RSL leadership. We would approach the question from the angle, that just as we cannot leave the problem of the war in the hands of the capitalists, so it would be fatal to leave the problem of peace in their hands. Peace in the modern epoch, if imperialism still survives, will not be much different from war. Peace under capitalism cannot be of long duration, but merely an interlude.

The sole road for ensuring peace would lie in the overthrow of imperialism in Europe and the world. In effect then our emphasis might shift in our agitation from the difference between war waged in the interests of the masses and war waged by the capitalists, on the one hand, to peace in the interests of workers, and peace in the interests of the capitalists, on the other. The axis of our agitation would remain the same: the problem of power – which class holds and wields the power in its own interests.

In order to strengthen their case, the RSL quotes from War and the Fourth International: “The revolutionary struggle for peace which takes on ever wider and bolder forms is the surest means of ‘turning the imperialist war into a civil war’...” This conditional prognosis of the possible development of events is used merely as a cover for a pacifist or semi-pacifist position. However, even in the Russian revolution, which is deemed “typical” of the events which will take place in other countries, the slogan of “peace” was not separated by Lenin from the idea of revolutionary war. On the contrary, Lenin waged a struggle, especially in the first months of the revolution, precisely around the question of “revolutionary war” being possible only if the proletariat held state power. However, he never considered it in the bald way in which the problem is conceived by the RSL.

True it is, that the slogan of peace was one of the mightiest weapons in the arsenal of Bolshevism. However, this conditional formula does not necessarily have to be put forward at all stages of the war, possibly not at all at certain periods. Slogans such as “Peace” are based on the consciousness of the masses. At the present time the masses in Britain are what the RSL chooses to call “chauvinist”. Faced with a choice between peace with a victory for Hitler, or even a compromise with the Nazis, and the continuance of the war, 99 percent would favour a continuance of the war. The Labour leaders justify their support for the capitalist government by the necessity to fight Hitlerism. What can the RSL reply to this? To refer to the enemy at home is very good and correct, but does not constitute a reply to the worker. For he does not desire a foreign conqueror and a fascist one at that. Instead of looking down with scorn and disgust at the “chauvinist” masses, the RSL leaders should try and learn something from the workers as well as attempt to be their “teacher”.

An instructive episode occurred in the early stages of the war in 1939, before the fall of France. The Stalinists, during their “anti-war” period, launched a campaign in their stronghold of South Wales. They secured a referendum among the South Wales miners on the question of war. This among one of the most militant and class conscious sections of the workers in Britain. A great deal of discontent and uneasiness existed among the miners on the question of the war. They were suspicious of the aims of the ruling class. Under these conditions, the Labour and reformist bureaucrats had to execute a manoeuvre to prevent the Communist Party from gaining big support among the miners on the ballot vote. They placed the question on the following basis: “Against the war” or “For the war with a Labour government”. As was to be expected they secured an overwhelming majority of the votes for the latter. And this was at a time when Hitler had not gained his tremendous victories and the masses did not feel directly threatened by the totalitarian heel of the Nazis.

To reach these workers we must have a programme that can face up to the problem squarely of the defeat of reaction both at home and abroad. It is significant in this connection that the pacifists have lost a great part of what little support they had at the beginning of the war. Even the ILP has been compelled to modify its pacifist outlook. And even from the intransigent and isolated RSL

leadership, while retaining basically its pacifist outlook, no more is heard of the pathetic slogan “Stop the war!”. All this, of course, has been due to the unparalleled victories of German imperialism.

The leadership of the RSL has been unable to orient themselves to events and apply the revolutionary method which a theoretical understanding of the past would demand. For them everything must be an exact replica of the past. Revolution in war time must follow the exact pattern of the Russian revolution. In reality history proceeds in a far more complex way. The events of all revolutions are decided by the fundamental structure of class society, and that is why the basic laws of all revolutions can be formulated and predicted in advance. But to lay down an absolute blueprint, from which events cannot deviate, would be scholastic nonsense. There are too many factors involved which are completely incalculable. The Paris Commune[26] developed on different lines from the Russian revolution; the Russian from the Chinese and Spanish, etc., etc. On questions of this character, the lines of development can be indicated only algebraically.

### **The situation in Britain today**

Let us examine how the RSL sees the present situation in Britain today:

“Nor are these false policies long in emerging. ‘The corruption and incompetence, industrial and militarily, raises sharply in the minds of the workers the question of the regime.’ There is no question of misunderstanding this sentence. It means that the workers are questioning the right of capitalism to continue as the system in this country. This, before the workers have even begun to display a mass sentiment for peace, while they still support the imperialist war and are, in fact, anxious to see it more efficiently and more offensively conducted. Either all previous history was accidental and from it no lessons can be learned, or else the WIL utterly misunderstands and distorts not only the

present position of British imperialism, but also the present stage of development of working class consciousness. We incline to the latter theory. The mood of the masses is still predominantly in support of the imperialist war and the British bourgeoisie is conducting the war as efficiently as the limitations of 'democratic capitalism' permit.

“These factors do not provide for the ‘rapid maturing’ of ‘all the conditions for social explosions.’ What social explosions do come, as come they will, they will not arise upon the basis of demands by the workers for a more efficient prosecution of the war. No class struggles can arise on this issue because it is not a class issue as far as the workers are concerned. This is not their war and they have no class interest in victory in it.

“At present the masses are under the ideological leadership of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois and hence support the imperialist war.

“Many defeats have been suffered by the British bourgeoisie in this war and sections of the workers have, as a result, criticised the leadership of the bourgeoisie and demanded a more efficient prosecution of the struggle. But this is not a proletarian class reaction to the situation, it is a petty bourgeois reaction and is possible only because the workers are still imbued with alien class ideology. Such working class discontent will stop at grumbling, in the same way as the similar and even more vocal discontent of the petty bourgeois does, and may even be transformed by British victories into greater support for the imperialist government.

“It cannot lead to working class action, just because the demand for a more efficient prosecution of the imperialist war is not a class demand for the workers. Moreover, class action by the workers, as they know, would yet further impair the efficiency of British imperialism. British defeats can lead to social explosions, but they will be explosions caused by war weariness, by a desire to end the fruitless slaughter, to escape from the economic hardships of war and to

bring an enduring peace and prosperity to the world.”

These lines indicate a complete lack of comprehension of the position in Britain today. They constitute an indictment of the stagnant position in which the RSL finds itself. Any organisation with the remotest connection with the working class in Britain would realise that this is hopelessly incorrect as an appraisal of the actual situation. From the secluded cliffs of Eastbourne the situation may look something as portrayed above. But in the development of the class struggle, the position is entirely different. The development of mass consciousness in Britain during the war has been in the direction of a “socialist” and, yes... even a “communist” consciousness.

Among the workers, within the ranks of the armed forces, among wide strata of the middle classes, a growing ferment and a process of radicalisation has been taking place. There has not been a period in Britain for many decades in which the minds of the masses have been so receptive to revolutionary ideas and revolutionary perspectives. The objective, and even in a sense, the subjective conditions for the socialist revolution are already maturing in Britain. It can be stated without exaggeration that the ground is more favourable for the swift growth of Trotskyism within the British working class than at any time in the history of our movement. There is a growing and widespread criticism and lack of confidence in the ruling class.

The present relationship of forces between the classes has been completely undermined. This, in its turn, has its effect within the ranks of the ruling class, where differences and fissures have been opening out. We are in a pre-revolutionary situation. With a correct policy we can gain a good springboard for a great leap in influence in the coming period. Here we see why it is that the WIL has made substantial if modest gains in the present milieu, while the RSL has declined and disintegrated.

But in order to take advantage of the situation it is necessary to understand the

process that is taking place and the way in which the mass consciousness will develop. With an air of smug incredulity, the RSL proclaim “there is no question of misunderstanding this sentence. It means that the workers are questioning the right of capitalism to continue as the system of this country...” If this means that we say that the workers seriously desire a socialist revolution now, it is nonsensical. But that the workers are unconsciously moving in this direction, is true beyond a doubt. Yes, comrades, we definitely assert that the workers are beginning to challenge the right of capitalism to continue as the system of this country.

Only hopeless scholastics would attempt to lay down a rigid pattern from which events do not deviate. The RSL pictures the workers as if they were in a state of violent and hysterical chauvinism. They triumphantly point to the undoubted fact that the overwhelming majority of the masses still support the war. But they do this because of a desire to defend their rights and their organisations from destruction, and not at all from a desire to defend the capitalist class. It is a pity that the RSL never asks the question: why if their mechanical schema is correct, the defeats of British imperialism in the past did not lead the masses to demand “peace” but on the contrary, led them to desire to see the war “more efficiently and more offensively conducted”? Nor do they explain why the workers, who support the war, have become more and more critical of the ruling class despite the victories, as is shown from the by-election results and the increased number of strikes. Any pseudo-socialist programme has secured big support against government candidates at by-elections. The Common Wealth[27], reflecting the move of the petit-bourgeoisie towards the proletariat has secured successes in traditional Tory strongholds. The Times sees in this an ominous “portent” of the feeling of the masses. The “revolutionary Marxists” of the RSL are incapable of making this correct evaluation. Literally, there is not a single firm social prop within the population upon which the bourgeoisie could be certain of relying in a social crisis. The civil servants in one union after another are violating the Trade Disputes Act. Even the police have not been unaffected by the prevailing mood within the population.

It is precisely in an attempt to sidetrack this mood among the masses, that the Beveridge scheme has been brought forward. Millions of workers are sceptical

of the aims of the ruling class in the war and of the results of a British victory. But they still support the war. Is it because they have a hatred of the “Huns” as the RSL would have us believe? On the contrary, among the broad masses, especially those organised in the Labour and trade union movement such a feeling is non-existent. As if to mock the position of the RSL the victories of the British armies in North Africa have coincided with strikes and unrest throughout the country on wage questions. According to the RSL’s version, the opposite should have taken place. In reality there is no contradiction here. The masses support the war because they cannot see any alternative. In the meantime, the class struggle does not wait. Here is the key to the mood in Britain which the Old Man so clearly visualised. The masses are becoming critical of capitalism and imperialism, but feel themselves paralysed by fear of the consequences of a Nazi victory. The military policy[28] and the Old Man’s writings give us the weapon that provides the answer to the questions which are troubling the masses.

The leadership of the RSL still supports the idea of agitating for Labour to take power. How does it happen that they support what, according to their method of reasoning, should obviously be a “chauvinist” demand? And they have done so right throughout the course of the war. Far from the Labour leadership desiring “peace”, even the so-called left wing of the type of Shinwell and Bevan are more zealous than anyone else in their support of the war. The RSL talks of the big swing in the direction of Labour that will take place in the next period. This is correct, but they have not understood or explained why this is so.

The first big swing of the workers to the left, a process which is in its beginnings already, will come because of the dissatisfaction with the contrast between their own conditions and the profits and privileges of the capitalist class. It will not be an anti-war movement as such at all. In spite of the Labour Party’s wholehearted support of the war, the masses will inevitably move towards the Labour Party. A revolutionary situation does not arise with the masses as hysterical patriots one day, and deliriously demanding peace the next. Their demands will reflect themselves in pressure on the leadership of the mass organisations. Today that pressure is being reflected in the movement towards the ending of the political truce. But the growth of the mass feeling for the ending of the coalition is

expressed as a reaction against support for the bourgeoisie, not against support for the war. What programme does the RSL suggest we should develop among the masses as the programme for the Labour government? A programme for immediate peace?

As fear of a Hitler victory subsides, the demands of the masses for improvements and concessions grow. This is especially so, as the broad strata realise, that victory and the ending of the war will not improve their conditions, but will result in mass unemployment and widespread distress. In spite of the ideas of the RSL, the experiences of the last war and its aftermath have not gone without leaving traces on the consciousness of the working class. The need for Marxists is to dissect and find what is progressive in the contradictory moods and to understand the changes in the psychology and movement of the masses.

The attempt of the Labour and trade union leaders to demagogically intensify their promises to the working class of the glorious prospects after the war is far from achieving startling success. The Stalinists are beginning to reap the rewards of their strike-breaking and anti-working class activity in the shape of increasing antagonism towards them on the part of the workers. And this, in spite of their attempts to whip up and intensify chauvinist feelings, and in spite of the widespread sympathy for the Soviet Union. Strikes last year were the highest in many years in the face of innumerable difficulties and obstacles placed before the workers by the Stalinist and Labour bureaucrats. Hardly an indication of tranquil relationships in Britain!

But in one factor, we see the amazing maturity of the working class demonstrated better than anything else: the widespread critical attitude not only towards the bourgeoisie, but towards the Labour leaders. This is not an isolated phenomenon, but embracing large sections of the workers, organised and unorganised, in industry and in the armed forces. Broad sections of the workers have no illusions about the trade union bureaucrats, yet their class instinct and solidarity makes them cling to their organisations despite this. For the present they tolerate them for lack of an alternative.



The whole situation imperiously demands that we prepare for the explosions that are developing by understanding what is taking place in the objective development of events and their subjective reaction within the consciousness of the working class. The revolutionary minority can play a role even now, and can make certain of a powerful influence on the coming revolution. That we are in a period of black reaction and chauvinism within the working class can only be the opinion of sectarians who are completely out of touch with the working class.

### **The LP tactic**

The attitude towards the Labour Party and towards the mass organisations provides the key to the policy of any organisation claiming to be revolutionary in Britain. An incorrect position on this question would be fatal for the revolutionary tendency, especially one so weak and inexperienced as our own.

In order to overcome the isolation of the weak revolutionary forces, the tactic of “entrism” has been evolved by the Fourth International. It has been applied in different countries with varying success. But in all countries it has been conceived as a temporary tactic to facilitate the formation of the revolutionary party. In no case has it lasted for more than a couple of years. Indeed the whole conception underlying this tactic would be violated, if the idea of a permanent or semi-permanent sojourn in a centrist or reformist organisation were to pervade the actions of the revolutionaries. It is a tactic, and as such requires periodic examination to observe the results obtained, the possibilities of more fruitful results in different directions if different tactics were to be applied, etc.

The essence of Marxism consists in subjecting one’s strategy and tactics to the test of historical events and making the necessary revisions and alterations if these are called for by such events. That is why in 1936 the Old Man advised the

British Trotskyists to bring to a close the tactic of working within the ILP and to turn towards the Labour Party. At that period the ILP was stagnating and falling to pieces; the Trotskyists were making little headway in the ILP and also stagnating (there were a number of reasons for this apart from the objective situation in the ILP which cannot be dealt with here). Anticipating the collapse of the ILP as the result of its sectarian isolation, comrade Trotsky suggested entry into the Labour Party. This was correct at the time but subsequent events called for a further examination of the question. To mention but a single factor, owing to the way events have developed, instead of the ILP vanishing from the arena as the Old Man predicted, it has had a temporary rebirth and increase in influence.

But from a temporary expedient, the RSL wishes to convert a tactic into an eternal principle. With an air of superciliousness, they point out that the tactic of entry into the Labour Party was raised by Trotsky and the IS in 1936. That is, seven years ago. And what years! The world has been plunged into war, empires have vanished, we are entering a period of revolutionary convulsions. The whole development of social relations in Britain has suffered violent shocks, and with it the perspectives for the development of parties, classes and groups has undergone profound and far-reaching changes. But for the RSL sectarians nothing has changed. Their placid and uneventful “work in the Labour Party” which they were carrying on in 1936 remains the basis of their “activity” in 1943.

In support of the correctness of their position, they quote with an air of satisfaction from the Thesis of the WIL published in 1938:

“For the Labour Party, functioning as it does in bourgeois democracy, war time is election time, and in the peace period between elections, it becomes a mere skeleton, passively supported by its individual, trade union and co-operative members. At the present moment, except for the passive ripples of by-elections, its work is carried on by a small minority consisting in the main of the bureaucracy, a sprinkling of ambitious careerists, a few veterans who support the

bureaucracy and the factions sent in by external organisations.’

“Hardly, we would note in passing, ‘an organisation which is in a state of flux... where political life is at a high pitch’ and ‘where the membership is steadily moving towards the left!’

“‘The mass membership for whose benefit the various postures are adopted are [sic - RSL] notably absent from the auditorium... But far from negating the activity of the revolutionary socialists within the Labour Party, the peace time structure gives them a political weight out of all proportion to their numerical strength... As the crisis forces increasing numbers of workers from passive to active support of the Labour Party, they will find within the party a nucleus around which to gather, and party growth means growth of the left wing.’”

At the time these words were written this evaluation of the development of the Labour Party seemed most likely. It is certainly true that the Labour Party remained a skeletonised organisation. But this does not at all invalidate the description of the tactic of entry given in Preparing for power. At that period it was a question of preparing points of support in the coming battleground of the Labour Party; preparing in advance for the influx of members which, correctly or incorrectly we expected the Labour Party to have in the immediate period ahead. However, events have worked out in a different way. What to do then? Turn one’s back on reality and stick doggedly to an obviously obsolete conception? This is the RSL method. It is not the method of Bolshevism.

The war and the events of the war have cut completely across the line of development of the consciousness of the workers and given it a different direction to what might have been anticipated. It is this that the RSL cannot or will not understand. We see this from the following statements:

“The WIL admit that ‘at a later stage’ the workers ‘will turn to the Labour Party’. They admit that at present the only movement is on the industrial field. But though realising that the political expression of this industrial movement will come first inside the LP, they refuse to attempt to orientate the workers today towards the LP, i.e. to facilitate and hasten this movement. They fear that if they do so the workers will turn to the CP and the ILP, although they have already agreed that the workers will turn to the Labour Party.”

What exactly does “orientating” the workers towards the Labour Party mean? If it is suggested that the basic core of the workers should be won over to support the Labour Party, the RSL is wasting its time. The organised workers in Britain have been supporting the Labour Party for decades. If the idea behind this is that of pushing the Labour Party into power as a means of facilitating the exposure of the Labour leaders, the method of expressing it is rather ambiguous.

It is perfectly true that the workers will turn to the Labour Party at a certain stage. But which workers? The process will be a not at all simple one. As the more backward elements move towards the Labour Party, simultaneously the more advanced elements tend to move away and seek for some other alternative. This is the case in relation to some of the best militants at the present time.

The experience of two Labour governments and the present collaboration in the government has not passed without some deep-seated effect. (We may say in passing that the RSL has not yet abandoned the thoroughly stupid slogan of a “Third Labour government” despite the criticism of the IS that it be dropped because it “indicates a continuity with the lamentable experiences of the past”. But we are not discussing this here.) At the present time the ILP is attracting some of the more advanced workers into its ranks. The Stalinists on the other hand are attracting a large number of backward workers, where previously they had won the best and most conscious militant industrial workers. Meanwhile the best elements within the CP are becoming disillusioned in large numbers, and are leaving the party or being expelled for opposing Stalinist policy. These workers form part of the cream of the working class. With correct work, they can

be completely broken from Stalinist and centrist leadership, but they will not turn towards the Labour Party. They can become apathetic and turn towards a pure syndicalist tendency, but they will not turn towards the Labour Party.

For the working class as a whole the strategic slogan remains “Labour to power” as a means of mobilising the masses for struggle and educating them through their own experiences as to the futility of reformism. But this is not in contradiction to the task of winning the more advanced elements, already disillusioned with reformism, directly to our ranks. As the “Socialist left in the Labour Party” we could not expect to get a hearing from these elements.

But as always the sectarians of the RSL leadership are incapable of distinguishing more than two colours in the social spectrum. They say of our document:

“But with regard to the same question of the workers turning to the LP at a certain stage in their struggle, we find in the WIL document a certain ambiguity, which savours strongly of the ‘double book-keeping’ of third period Stalinism... All these statements are obviously intended to throw doubt on the first quoted statement that the masses will turn to the LP...”

In reality there is not the slightest ambiguity or “double dealing” in the attitude adopted by the WIL, but an attempt to approach the problem of a mass movement from the angle of its many-sided and complex development. A mass movement never develops in the simple one-direction way in which it is pictured by the RSL, far from it. It reveals itself in contradictory and differing ways. In the last analysis, what is the whole basis for the historical need for a revolutionary party? Among other things, the fact that neither society nor the working class is homogeneous. The differing strata among the working class develop a revolutionary consciousness at different times, different places and at different levels. The working class contains advanced, backward, indifferent and inert strata, who find their way to the revolution by diverse means. To suggest

that the whole of the working class simultaneously will turn to the Labour Party is so much formalistic nonsense. But that is the only conclusion that could be drawn from the statement of the RSL. For them a dialectical approach is “double book-keeping”.

Our present orientation does not mean that at a later stage it may not be necessary to place the whole of our forces within the Labour Party. This is a possibility, though it seems unlikely. But to suggest that we do so now is frivolous in the extreme and shows a lack of seriousness towards the question of building the Party. Far more likely, if the question of entrism assumes major importance, would be entry into the ILP. The affiliation of the ILP to the Labour Party, which now appears to be a most likely development, will sweep away the chimera of the “Socialist left in the Labour Party”. It is fairly obvious that the ILP would automatically become the left wing, attracting the leftward moving Labour workers to its ranks. But even this can only be determined by the relationship of forces in the future.

As a climax to their argument, the RSL states:

“The WIL or its leaders have not yet had the courage to deny openly in writing that the workers will turn first to the LP, but they are preparing the way for doing so. We may hear in the future that the masses are ‘skipping over’ the LP phase and turning directly to... the WIL!”

It may surprise the RSL leaders, but some workers are... turning directly to the WIL! And these are undoubtedly the best material for Bolshevism. Not only that, but the WIL confidently anticipates that large numbers of the best workers will take that step in the future without any deference to the RSL’s schematic idea of how they should develop.

The whole method of their approach to the entrism tactic is false through and through. It reveals a completely opportunist approach to the problem of winning the workers over to Trotskyism. Nowhere else in the world have the Trotskyists, when conducting the entrism tactic, depicted themselves as the “left wing” separate and apart from their open characterisation of themselves as Trotskyists. The RSL alone has done so.

It is interesting to note an admission in the reply to us which reveals their isolation at the present time. They say:

“The WIL admit that ‘at a later stage’ the workers will ‘turn to the Labour Party’. They admit that at present the only movement is on the industrial field...”

It is agreed then, that there is a movement of the masses at the present time, and that it is outside the Labour Party and not inside. The Labour Party being more or less dead at the present time, obviously the attention of serious Trotskyists must be devoted to that sector where activity and a milieu for work are in evidence.

Continuing their line of argument from the above, they say:

“But though realising that the political expression of this industrial movement will come first inside the LP they refuse to orientate the workers today towards the LP, i.e. to facilitate and hasten this movement...”

From this, the RSL are themselves saying, whatever the orientation may be in the future, that work at the present period lies outside the LP, in the unions and in the factories. They say we must approach these workers with the banner of the

Labour Party. This is ridiculous. A section of them are already formally members, and another section are hostile to the Labour Party from a progressive point of view. These can be convinced of the correctness of the “Labour to power” tactic, but simultaneously with this, and as an indispensable part of it, can and must be won over to Trotskyism. The most important task at the present time, and we may say, one in which we are having a fair amount of success, is to recruit the industrial militants and militant leaders of the working class into our ranks.

To approach these industrial militants, who are clashing sharply with the Labour Party and trade union bureaucrats in the industrial field, as Labour Party members of the “socialist left”, would be merely to confuse them. This is standing the entrism tactic on its head. Originally the tactic was conceived as working among the advanced workers in a reformist or centrist organisation to which we directed our whole attention, and for which we had to pay the temporary high price of the loss of an independent banner. We worked inside the organisations as Trotskyists. Now the RSL asks us to approach the workers outside as “left Labourites”! Merely to pose the question clearly, shows the absurdity of the position the RSL has landed into, by clinging to a tactic which history has already shown to be incorrect for the present period.

Making a fetish of the tactic of entrism, converting it into a mystic principle standing above time and place, sometimes lands the RSL into fantastic positions. For example, the insistence of the RSL in “critically” supporting Labour candidates against the Stalinist and ILP anti-war candidates. By this stand they, the principled and implacable revolutionaries, found themselves in a position of critical support for the national government, because of the coalition of Labour with the Tories! A vote for the Labour candidate could only be interpreted as a vote for the government and thus for support of the war. Thus they placed themselves in a thoroughly opportunist position on the question of the war. (Here we may say that WIL gave critical support to the Stalinist and ILP anti-war candidates; at no time have we supported pacifist candidates as the RSL lyingly informed the IS in a letter of July 7 1942.)



The main idea of entrism, the necessity to operate on a single field in a given set of circumstances, is summed up as in our 1938 document, in military terminology: “full strength at the point of attack.” Posed in this way the situation and the tasks become clearer. It is not without significance that the RSL has not posed the question to WIL from this angle: why are we not concentrating our forces “full strength at the point of attack” in the Labour Party at the present time? For it would raise the reply: it is ridiculous to concentrate one’s army in war on a sector of the front where there are no results to be achieved. Today the “point of attack” is the industrial field. But favourable results can be achieved by the adoption of guerrilla tactics. Owing to the development of events, magnificent opportunities for work open up before us in every direction – the trade unions, the ILP, the factories, shop stewards’ movement, and... even the Labour Party.

To concentrate work inside the Labour Party – the least important field at the present stage – would be suicidal. In politics, as in war, a commander who fails to make the necessary changes in the strategic and tactical disposition of his men when the relationship of forces has changed, leads his army to defeat. Such are the commanders of the RSL.

### **The nature of the RSL**

In reading the section of the RSL document which deals with the Labour Party tactic, one is struck with the weird combination of complete ultra-leftism towards the war question and opportunist approach towards the problem of work in the Labour Party. It is in the nature of sectarianism to transform itself, at the first serious test, into opportunism.

For they are two sides of the same coin. But the RSL succeeds in combining both simultaneously into their policy. At first sight it seems incredible. A sectarian policy of so-called “revolutionary defeatism” which is completely

divorced from the working class and the class struggle... and inside the Labour Party into the bargain! But the solution is quite simple. The RSL are sectarians, but of a curious type. It is in the nature of small sectarian groupings to attempt to cover up their inadequacies in policy by a show of tremendous activity, at least for a certain period, before their forces wear themselves out in fruitless effort.

But despite their sectarianism, such an accusation could never be levelled against the RSL; and this is the secret of their policy. Never has the RSL applied its policy in practice in a consistent way anywhere within the ranks of the working class. Consequently the most extreme opportunism can nestle side by side with the most extreme sectarianism without any severe jolting.

For they never pass from words to deeds. Anyone with the slightest acquaintance with Labour workers, their outlook and their approach to problems, can see that any attempt to put forward the RSL's present ideas would be lunacy. But the RSL overcomes this little difficulty very simply. They never put forward their so-radical policy within the Labour Party. This would be transgressing the limits of faction work! Within the Labour Party they act as "socialist lefts". Their "RRRevolutionary" policy on the war remains within the four walls of their bedrooms. Consequently, they can be as radical as they please. The world proceeds as usual, and they can sleep more soundly having done their revolutionary duty. But the matter does not end there. The Labour Party is almost dead at the present time. If the wards and borough parties are meeting at all, they meet very infrequently. This obliges people conducting "activity within the Labour Party" to do very little. In practice, work in the Labour Party means very little work. This suits the leadership of the RSL perfectly. All their grandiose phrases are but a compensation for their sterility and impotence.

In the last analysis, the basis of the errors of the RSL leadership lies in its petty bourgeois mentality. They conduct their policy in a milieu of inertia, gossip, and that of a discussion club. No serious attempt is made to train and organise a party that will be worthy of the tasks confronting it. Its policy is a product of its isolation and alienation from the working class. Instead of growing and

increasing its membership, it is degenerating and stagnating. Unless a radical change is made in policy and methods of work, it will inevitably disintegrate. As a factor in the political arena it is of less significance today than when the war began. Continuation on the present course will lead to complete disappearance from the scene.

For years, the leadership of the RSL flogged the question of “unity” of the Trotskyist forces in Britain. Now that the question comes up in a sharp fashion, the leadership, and even more the membership of the RSL, have a responsibility on this question. What is more, unity must be the first step towards work. It is time to allow fresh air into the stagnant atmosphere of the RSL. The membership of both organisations must integrate themselves in the actual field of class struggle and the joint carrying out of the policy of the Fourth International.

The period opening out in Britain has never been more favourable for our tendency. The dissolution of the Comintern opens up a new stage in the history of the Fourth International. The founding conference accepted the Transitional programme, developed by our great teacher, precisely because of the new stage in the development of the Fourth International. The revolutionary internationalists in Britain must adapt themselves to this new position. The sectarian and opportunist position, both with regard to the Labour Party tactic and the attitude towards the war, must be abandoned. In the Transitional programme, comrade Trotsky deals with sectarians as follows:

“Most of the sectarian groups and cliques, nourished on accidental crumbs from the table of the Fourth International, lead an ‘independent’ organisational existence, with great pretensions but without the least chance of success. Bolshevik-Leninists, without waste of time, calmly leave these groups to their own fate. However, sectarian tendencies are to be found also in our own ranks and display a ruinous influence on the work of the individual sections. It is impossible to make [any] further compromise with them for a single day. A correct policy regarding trade unions is a basic condition for adherence to the Fourth International.

“He who does not seek and does not find the road to the masses is not a fighter but a dead weight on the party. A programme is formulated not for the editorial board or for the leaders of discussion clubs but for the revolutionary action of millions. The cleansing of the ranks of the Fourth International of sectarianism and incurable sectarians is a primary condition for revolutionary success.”

The false position of the RSL leadership cannot and must not be maintained. Together with the WIL, the RSL must build the party of the Fourth International in Britain. To adopt any other course will be fatal to the RSL: we appeal to the membership of the RSL to speed up the negotiations and secure unity on a principled Bolshevik basis.

Political Bureau, WIL

June 7 1943

# Correspondence

## June - September 1943

### Ted Grant to RSL

London, June 13 1943

To the secretary, RSL

Dear comrade,

Enclosed is a copy of our reply to your Criticism of “Preparing for power”. We apologise for the delay, but as you see it is a fairly lengthy document and we were unable to complete it sooner.

We are about to issue it as an internal bulletin for which we are charging our members 6d per copy. If you wish us to supply your organisation, we would be pleased if you will let us know by return the number you will require.

The other points you raise in your letter to us dated June 6 1943 will be dealt with in a further letter.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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## **Reply of WIL to the TO**

London, June 13 1943

Secretary, TO

Dear comrade,

In reply to your letter of June 4th we are prepared, as always, to open up discussions for unification at once. In view, however, of your vacillating record as a fraction, and the record of the separate individuals and groups of individuals who go to make up the so-called TO, we must bluntly state that we are not prepared to fence and reopen up a discussion unless it is in the most serious strain. In other words, we are not prepared to “discuss” for the sake of discussion. As a prerequisite for further negotiations we propose that you clear up the following questions:

Is the TO a faction of the RSL? Does it consider itself as such or does it now constitute a separate organisation with its own policy, constitution and discipline?

Do you propose a fusion of our forces independently of what decisions are arrived at as the result of the present discussions which we are conducting with the RSL?

In view of the fusion of the TO with the so-called SWG, which refused to join the WIL for alleged political differences and not because of alleged disagreements on the principle of democratic centralism (which the SWG never raised during discussions with us); and in view of the verbal criticisms being made by the personnel of the TO which indicate agreement with the political evaluation of WIL policy by the ex-SWG, does the TO propose to open up a written political discussion outlining its points of agreement and differences with us?

Here we must state that your present campaign around the question of democratic centralism is worthless as a basis of discussion unless it is linked up to the political and tactical tasks of the British fourth internationalists. Any serious discussion must be based upon common aim. This common purpose must be stated in clear and precise terms, together with the main political and tactical agreements and disagreements. If the TO wishes to open up a discussion on this basis, good! Endless discussion such as have occurred in the last 18 months or so is useless, irresponsible and unacceptable to us.

The responsibility for the deterioration in the relations between us rests entirely on the shoulders of the leadership of the TO. You broke off the common activity in cooperation into which we had entered prior to the visit of Stuart. In Glasgow, Coventry and London where you have members, we have afforded and still afford full scope to your members for joint discussions and active cooperation (which latter you have largely evaded) with our local comrades.

We welcome, however, any joint activity in which you are prepared to participate.

With regard to the film Mission to Moscow, we had already arranged to issue the article which appeared recently in the Appeal as a pamphlet. This is already nearly complete. If you are willing to assist in covering the cinemas, we suggest you contact H. Pratt, the secretary of the London DC who is in charge of the arrangements. Your comrades should do the same in Glasgow and Coventry. They have the addresses of the secretaries. The RSL have categorically stated that they will not enter into united activity with us. And past experience teaches us not to waste time approaching “other working class organisations” on such questions which only affect the Trotskyists.

Yours fraternally,

Grant

*Secretary*

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## **Marc Loris to Ted Grant**

July 15 1943

Dear Grant:

I received your letter of June 3rd, as well as the copy of your May 24th letter to RSL. Under separate cover I received a copy of the June 6th letter from the RSL to WIL, as well as a copy of your June 13th letter to the TO. Unfortunately, we do not have all the documents to which these various letters refer, for instance, your April 3rd letter to RSL and their May 7th letter to you, nor the June 4th letter from TO to you.



Not only the dissolution of the Comintern, as you correctly state, but the general development of the situation, make more and more imperative and urgent a solution of the British problem. Moreover, the evolution of the various groups in the last two or three years is quite clear. It is our duty – and we are firmly decided to fulfil it – to come to a settlement before coming events catch us unprepared.

You must understand, however, that negotiations for unification are not independent of the factional struggle inside the RSL. That's why your conditions in the June 13th letter to TO seem to miss the point. Moreover, a certain irritation against Lawrence can be observed in that letter. Lawrence has followed a policy of bringing issues into the open in a manner calculated to have a broad educational effect. This policy seems to have borne some fruit, since, as it is just reported to us, a new opposition has arisen against DDH. But, whatever may be the importance of this last development, Lawrence has undertaken to solve the problem in a spirit of international discipline, not as a free-lance. I must say that we support him entirely on this point.

A few words about the question you raise concerning personal letters. They come, as far as I know, from Stuart or Cooper. I myself entered into correspondence with Deane on practical matters, then Deane asked me some political questions: I tried to answer him as well as I could. These letters – and there may be others I don't know about – are exactly what they are, i.e. personal letters. Their authority is that which their signatories may have acquired – no more, no less – and, of course, the responsibility for the letters is exclusively theirs. As to the advisability of the letters, there is no general rule: it depends on the situation, and I think at the present time they may be helpful.

You ask “the opinions of the IS on the contents of these letters.” [I don't think] it would be correct procedure on our part to give such “opinions”. Each time we deem it necessary, we state our opinion in official letters or documents. The timing and the contents of these documents are determined by the objective

necessities of the situation; they cannot be made dependent on the sending of personal letters, which might oblige us to take positions on points on which we are not ready to do.

We received a copy of the Internal Bulletin you published, with Cooper's letter. We can only welcome this publication, as well as your coming reply. You declare in the introduction: "We only hope that the American party will also circulate the correspondence among the membership in the States." It seems to me here that the problem is not put quite correctly. The question is not at all of a polemic between WIL and SWP; the problem is the integration of WIL into the ranks of the Fourth International. The fact that Cooper is an American has no bearing on the case: he might be of any other country. If at a certain case of the discussion the IS deems necessary to let all the sections know the details of the negotiations, it will publish a series of documents, perhaps including Cooper's letter in an international bulletin.

We are regularly receiving your publications, and following closely your activity. Your successes are very promising. We are firmly decided to spare no effort in the next period to bring WIL into the ranks of the FI, and we hope we will enter a period of closer and successful collaboration.

Best greetings,

*M. Loris*

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**Marc Loris to Ted Grant**

August 6 1943

Dear friend,

I received your letter dated June 14th with the enclosed document (Reply to RSL criticism of "Preparing for power"). The document is now passing around and I don't know yet the general opinion about it. But, if I may give my personal opinion, it seems to me to be a very, very good document.

I hope you now have in your hands my letter to you dated July 15th. I am anxiously awaiting your answer to it.

As you may have already seen in the magazine, I received J. Haston's letter of April 21 and Aubrey received Atkinson's letter of July 5. These letters are always a very great pleasure to us. Your paper and your magazine are coming through regularly.

Best greetings,

*M. Loris*

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**Ted Grant to Marc Loris**

London, August 15 1943

Dear comrade Loris,

Enclosed is a copy of a resolution on unification which it is proposed to put to our convention to be held in the beginning of October.

The resolution lays down the basis, as we see it, for a successful fusion of the Trotskyists forces in Britain. We should appreciate your views in time for the convention.

It seems to us that in 6 months, together with the IS, and largely dependent upon the IS, the discussion could be completed. But this would demand decisive political intervention by the IS. The organisational question is important but the political issues are decisive.

With fraternal greetings,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

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**Ted Grant to Gerry Healy**

London, August 21 1943

Re GH's Internal Bulletin on unity

Dear comrade Healy,

At its meeting of August 19 1943, the political bureau resolved:

“That we give permission to comrade Healy, together with one comrade who supports comrade Healy's line and a comrade who opposes it (comrade Hinchcliffe), to unofficially approach the RSL leadership with the three point “programme” contained in comrade Healy's document.

“The political bureau will relieve the comrades from all activity which interferes with an energetic, enthusiastic ‘fight for unity’, which should serve to expose the alleged ‘for the record’ method of the political bureau.”

The political bureau believes that the experience gained in the few weeks before the conference should prove instructive to the membership and assist in the deliberations of the conference.

Yours fraternally,

E. Grant

*Secretary*

# **Reply to comrades Cooper and Stuart**

## **The Bolshevik attitude to unity... and splits**

**by WIL PB**

September 11 1943

The letters of comrades Lou Cooper and Stuart[29] are models of how not to approach the problems of the separate groups in Britain, the differences between them, the building of the party, the attitude towards internationalism and the question of unification.

It is an almost unbelievable fact, that throughout the discussions on the disputes in the American party as well as in Britain, not once is mention made of the political basis of these disputes. Instead, we are treated to a high pressure sales talk on the benefit of “unity” without reference to time, place, conditions, developments, nature of the disputes, tendencies, social basis, etc., etc. We are asked to believe that all these disputes and splits can be traced to a lack of understanding of the organisational question. That “democratic centralism” is the magic panacea for all evils. The political questions apparently were of no importance.

Fortunately, these letters are merely “personal”, and without the authority of the international. Comrade Cooper starts off:

“Time and again we discussed, you remember, the necessity of WIL taking the lead in raising the banner of unity and storming hell or high water in order to achieve it. In our discussions I argued for consolidation on a principled basis in one united party, in which both programmes and all individuals and groups would prove themselves before the membership in the test of objective events.”

What is this supposed to mean? If comrade Cooper means that after thorough discussion, the policy of the majority is carried with the full rights of the minority to put forward their ideas internally, this is precisely the WIL’s position. But if this means that two tactics are to be operated inside the one organisation, in other words another 1938 which led to 10 splits in five years, then we categorically reject it. The first duty of comrade Cooper is to clarify his ideas on this question and give us precise formulations.

If comrade Cooper means that the WIL should devote the whole of its attention, or even the main attention of the party to the task of achieving “unity”, that would be nonsensical especially in the present period of mass upsurge within the British labour movement. The attitude towards such a proposition is one of tactics and expediency, and not at all a question of Bolshevik principle as such. It cannot be conceived in the abstract, but must be viewed from the political point of view, from the concrete positions of the tendencies, the development of the groups, the social composition, the past evolution, future possibilities, strength of organisation, cadres, etc. etc.

If comrade Cooper means that some attention must be devoted to the problem of unification, then let him refer to the “record.” That record which speaks so much in favour of WIL that he and other comrades across the Atlantic, not having any possible argument against it, refer to it as if forsooth, the WIL were committing some terrible crime in being in an unassailable position. Yes, comrade Cooper - we are for the record - and let the record speak! Since when has there been any other method for Marxists than that of studying the “record” to determine the position of any participants in political discussions?

In this connection, comrade Cooper characterises WIL's inability to "value tried and tested and proven Bolshevik organisational procedure that alone can firmly build national sections and an international party." Good! But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. In condemning WIL's lack of understanding of Bolshevik method, he says:

"From my own close study and from subsequent investigation I am convinced that WIL's original departure from the unification conference in 1938 was based on unprincipled grounds. No matter how grievous and unjust the WIL's leaders felt themselves personally attacked, they still had absolutely no right to leave the unification conference."

Close study? Subsequent investigation? This sounds very interesting, but unfortunately not very convincing and not very enlightening either. If comrade Cooper made a "close study" of the 1938 unification, then he is duty bound to give us the results of his labour. Here is the opportunity to expose the WIL leadership's alleged inability to face up to... tried and tested and proven Bolshevik organisational procedure. Instead, we get a light-minded assertion, without the remotest shred of evidence, that the WIL leaders felt themselves "personally attacked" in 1938 and that is why they refused to enter the unification. Where, comrade Cooper, is the record? They say fools go where angels fear to tread. It is a noteworthy but deplorable fact that, while repeating this senseless assertion, comrade Cooper fails to make a political analysis of the Statement of the WIL to the founding conference in 1938[30] on the question of unification. He forgets to show us the fruits of the "tried and tested and proven methods..." Precisely here is the opportunity to demonstrate principled politics. Why no mention of the results of the unification – or examination of the unity agreement? Because the results speak too loudly precisely in favour of the position as put forward by WIL.

The WIL alone of all the groups, maintained a principled democratic centralist position in 1938, as it does today. Our principled position was justified to the hilt



by subsequent events, as it will be in the future. It is a pity that since comrade Cooper made such a “close study” of the unification, and condemns WIL as unprincipled, he does not show how firmly built was the “united organisation”, which presumably was built on a principled basis. Elsewhere we have published some documents relating to the 1938 unity conference and its results. If necessary we will publish more and can return to this theme again. Suffice is to say that in the whole history of our movement, there can hardly be a more ill-omened or disastrous record of splits [than the one] arising from 1938.

An examination of our statement, taken in conjunction with the subsequent events in the “unified” organisation, would demonstrate conclusively that the source of the splits arose from the lack of political clarification, coupled with the “dual organisational structure” which permitted the operation of two tactics simultaneously, instead of the democratic centralist basis – one tactic, one policy – that of the majority, with democratic rights for the minority.

It would be a much more honest and simple statement of the truth to say that the 1938 unification was a failure, which fortunately, was not fatal for the Fourth International in Britain and the building of the revolutionary party, owing only to the courageous adherence to the principle of Bolshevism and democratic centralism by the WIL. This was not an easy task at that time when the WIL had only a handful of people in comparison with the large organisation which was claimed by the RSL. But, as we pointed out at the time, an organisation which developed on the basis of deep fissures – without discussion of the political and tactical differences and agreement arrived at on democratic centralist basis, was built on quicksand and would end in disaster. In reality all Cooper’s phrases beg the question. A genuine unification can only come on a principled programmatic and tactical basis.

Comrade Cooper repeatedly mis-states the actual position in 1938. WIL “must inevitably fail to explain how they happened to leave the Bolshevik international in 1938...” [!] “WIL’s original departure from the unification conference in 1938...” etc., etc. Nothing of the sort. WIL refused to sign an agreement, which

in its opinion, laid the basis not for unity, but for a series of demoralising splits. WIL has no need to apologise for its position in 1938. On the contrary, the divergent elements who made the agreement, are hard put to it to explain how they came to agree to such a document. It is now universally agreed that the unity laid the seeds of disaster for the RSL. If the WIL has not referred in its publications to the 1938 conference, it is not at all from embarrassment of its own position, which is easily defensible, but from loyalty to the Fourth International.

Comrade Cooper asks how the WIL can justify the present split to its membership. The separate existence of the WIL has been historically justified. In deeds, not in words, the WIL has demonstrated the correctness of its position in 1938. The position of WIL is “on the record”.

“Can the WIL leadership justify itself to its membership by saying they are moving heaven and earth to genuine unity?” The WIL leadership would be hard put to justify itself if it went further that it has done. The WIL leadership has no cause to justify its position before the membership. The policy and the attitude on this question was unanimously decided upon at our last national conference. Unity of the groups in Britain is important; but it is not an end in itself. The building of the revolutionary party in Britain is far more important – a party based on the methods and policy of Bolshevism. Furthermore, far from having to justify itself on the attitude of unity, comrade Stuart will be hard put to it to justify to the WIL membership, the prevention of unity of those who stood on the same political platform and the advocacy of a split.

Not having a single political argument, comrade Cooper falls back on personal and organisational grounds.

“Do you mean to say that DDH[31] or anyone else could hold back unity among English Trotskyists if the spirit [! – EG] of unity were deeply imbued in their consciousness? If the stick were really turned by WIL, in the direction of a

genuine [! – EG] agitation and a struggle for unity, all obstructions would be overcome.”

This is really almost disarming in its absurdity. If the RSL’s “obstruction” is purely organisational, the IS then has the imperative duty to take organisational measures against the leadership of the RSL. But the problem is not one of organisation only, or even principally, but of the political position of the RSL. Comrade Cooper points to the success of the WIL, which he naively remarks, bases itself on the Fourth International’s “timely transitional and military programme”. But he fails to deal with the decay and degeneration of the RSL which does not support this programme. Is this an accident, comrade?

It is noteworthy to see that comrade Cooper makes no concrete suggestions and no concrete proposals – apart from “spirit” and “genuineness”, on how the unification is to be achieved.

We have the sophistic argument that the WIL is only “getting away” with the present divisions in Britain because it “hides” the existence of the other Trotskyist organisations. In a document which must surely rank as a curiosity of “organisational Bolshevism”, this remark will take pride of place. Since when have Bolsheviks become advertising agents for their opponents? It is not beside the point to remark here that we had to “advertise” the existence of the RSL to the International with which it has lost connection. We believe that this is sufficient advertising. Every member in our ranks is acquainted with the fact that the WIL is not the official section. A mere explanation of the false political position of the other groups, together with the illuminating experience within the official section since 1938, is enough to convince any worker sympathiser.

But as Trotsky would say: “Excuse me, comrade, excuse me, excuse me.” Comrade Cooper has used a most unfortunate argument. Insofar as the RSL conducts any activity at all among the workers, our most [pressing] task is to convince the workers that we are not the same organisation. “If these are

Trotskyists,” the worker contacts have said, “then we want nothing of Trotskyism.” Naturally, the fact that they are the official section, certainly places us in an embarrassing position. But not from the angle that Cooper imagines. On the contrary, we are hard put up to defend the position of the International on this question and make an explanation of it.

“The WIL seems to go to the extreme limits to hide such information from its worker sympathisers. In the January issue of the Socialist Appeal, we have the scandalous picture of an appeal for united front action in industry to the ILP, and even the numerically insignificant anarchists, and not to the RSL! In recent issues of the Socialist Appeal there are also editorials discussing the bankruptcy of the old internationals, etc., and information that WIL is building the new international party in England, but not a word of the need of unity, or even of the existence of the RSL.”

What existence means for comrade Cooper, apparently means something else to Marxists and to WIL. Again, it is not the formal position, but the need to examine the problem dialectically. Trotsky wrote that it is easy to determine existence or non-existence of a party. Despite the official label, and with due apologies to comrade Cooper, as a genuine functioning Fourth International organisation, the RSL does not exist. Its significance for the past, the present, and the future of the international movement, its influence in the working class is so negligible as to be almost non-existent and will inevitably become zero. It is sad, and from the point of view of Cooper, a bitter pill, but the “insignificant” anarchists are far more important in industry than the RSL. Such is the sorry state of affairs. (Apart from the fact that this unimportant and unrepresentative group are far closer to the anarchists on industrial policy than they are to WIL or the Fourth International). But we can take no responsibility for it. It is to the point here to anticipate our argument, and ask comrade Cooper how it is that the SWP, far from offering a united front to the Oehlerites, the Fieldites, the Weisbordites[32], etc., in the States, who according to his own admission contained good elements, consistently ignored the constant bombardments of united front offers from them? Yet in Canada, they had a “united front” with the Fieldites. Why? Because in Canada the Fieldites meant something and with the given relation of forces, the Trotskyists were compelled to reckon with, and

compete with them. There is no principle involved here, but purely an estimate of what was to be gained and what lost. We might add, that on most of the rare occasions when we had the misfortune to appear publicly with the RSL, one of our main tasks was to disassociate ourselves from them, so well did they succeed in discrediting the name of Trotskyism. If necessary we can elaborate on this with our most recent experience only a few months ago when they disgraced the name of Trotskyism at the conference called by the Labour lefts.

If comrade Cooper would retort that they are the official section, we would agree, but that does not alter anything fundamental, that is ours and the International's misfortune. So far as the editorials in the Socialist Appeal are concerned, it is perfectly true that no mention is made of the need for unity. Because that is not the fundamental question for the readers of the Socialist Appeal. We have no need to convince them of this, or of the "existence" of the RSL either. It is up to the RSL to blow its own trumpet... if it can! We must ask comrade Cooper if he would consider the following advertisement would be suitable:

"Attention please!

"This is to draw the attention of the readers of the Socialist Appeal to the fact that the WIL is not the official section of the Fourth International. The official section is known as the Revolutionary Socialist League. It has no independent existence since it claims to be the 'Socialist Left in the Labour Party'. We cannot supply the address of the official section, for although we are conducting a political discussion for unification, they refuse to give us any address as a means of corresponding. We can, however, inform our readers that the minority of the RSL has recently expelled the majority and there are now three sections acknowledged by the IS [as] fourth internationalists. We must perforce warn our readers that the official section of the Fourth International alleges that the WIL, the American SWP and the IS hold a 'chauvinist' and an 'opportunist' position on the war... and have deserted the path of Bolshevism. We must apologise to our readers and supporters for any misconceptions that we may have created that

we are the genuine Trotskyists of Great Britain.”

If comrade Cooper wants an advertisement of the truth, there it is. Surely this must be a classic gem of “organisational Marxism”, when it is suggested that the unofficial section should publicise the official section. And what an organisation! What a section!

For what object, comrade Cooper? We are not in the movement for the pleasure of erecting Aunt Sallies for the purpose of knocking them down. There is no need for us to tackle the shadow of a shadow in our press. Far more important [is] to deal with the genuine antagonists in the labour movement with whom we are faced. That is more fruitful and more educational for the workers approaching our tendency. However, to say that we hide the existence of the RSL to our new members is simply untrue, and such statements betray comrade Cooper’s ignorance of the position within our organisation and within the Trotskyist movement as a whole in this country.

Our position in relation to the International and the RSL is always explained. The correspondence is always circulated. But if the blunt facts are to be stated, “officially” or not, there is only one section of the Fourth International in Britain: Workers’ International League. Comrade Cooper may say by what right can we arrogate this position to ourselves? By the right of the programme which we possess in common with the International and by the right of the work we are doing. Long ago, Marx and Engels gave a good reply to the German philistines who indignantly asked who had elected them as advisers and leaders of the Social Democracy in Germany: they had been elected by the bourgeoisie and all the enemies of Social Democracy who were attacking them, Engels gravely replied to the complaining deputation which was sent to interview them.

This in its turn, raises the question: what makes an organisation a section of the International? Merely the formal connection? Nothing of the sort. This is of tremendous importance, but what is decisive is the political programme. To

argue any other way is to stand internationalism on its head. It is to regard the problem in the same way as the centrists. “The International is first of all a programme and a system of strategic, tactical and organisational methods that flow from it.” And as comrade Cooper himself said in a speech to our members: “You are the Fourth International.” We do not know what made comrade Cooper change his mind; perhaps it is the climate of New York. Certainly he has not explained it by any other reason in his open letter to the British comrades, except by mysterious references to what he “discovered” and did not have time to tell us.

It is the blind and empirical insistence on the “organisational question” which can alone explain the crude errors against Marxism committed by comrade Cooper. The first question a Marxist would ask of any factional dispute, especially one which has raged for a number of years, and in which different tendencies have become firmly crystallised, is, what are the political differences? In what directions are the two factions moving? What is the social basis of the political positions adopted? How have the differences revealed themselves in action over a number of years? Etc., etc. This is certainly not the method adopted by comrade Cooper. Take this example of petit bourgeois thought:

“Woe to the WIL’s present stand if the RSL adopted by a majority the correct program for the day and started to grow! How will the WIL justify [the] split at that time?”

When we read these lines at first, we looked at one another with astonishment and consternation. Is this how the cadres are educated in America in their approach to problems, we wondered? For surely the least acquaintance with elementary Marxism would dictate the understanding that a group does not arrive at a political position by accident. In another Internal Bulletin we have dealt with the political ideas of the RSL and the evolution of its point of view. But it is to the point to remark here that they characterise the WIL and the Fourth International political position on war as “chauvinist”. That is, in war time, the most serious and fundamental crime against the interests of the working class

which any party claiming to be Marxist could commit. A crime which caused Lenin to break with the Social Democrats. Does comrade Cooper believe that there exist differences between us that need discussing and thrashing out? Are the differences between Bolshevism and sectarianism of no importance? Does comrade Cooper take the transitional and military programme, the strategy and tactics of Bolshevism in war time, as of such little importance that he can dismiss disagreements so lightly?

The position put by comrade Cooper cannot be taken seriously by anyone who thinks the problem out. What possible objection could, not the WIL, but the RSL leadership have to unity, if they held the same political position? What possible “obstruction” could they place in the way of unity? “Woe to the WIL...” What a terrible threat! That one’s opponent should adopt one’s point of view!

The WIL has stated it is prepared to unify: what then could possibly stand in the way of such a unification? The boot would rather be on the other foot, and the RSL would not have the slightest possibility of preventing unification. The bulk of the RSL membership has maintained its political position for three years or more. Most of those in the RSL who were won over to the position of the TO[33] belonged to a group which consisted of splitters from the RSL and expelled members of WIL and only “fused” with the RSL at a later date. The “principled” TO has been trying for more than 14 months, and have not succeeded in making the slightest impression on the RSL. But that such a fantastic and ridiculous statement should appear in a document intended to influence the WIL is disgraceful. If there was not a single other statement, this alone would be sufficient to destroy the effect the writer intended to have. It has about as much relevance to the situation as if we were to write to the SWP regarding the Schachtmanites: “Woe to the SWP if the Workers’ Party adopted a correct programme...”

Here we would point out that if the RSL held its “principles” seriously, it would be their duty to openly break with the Fourth International and prepare the formation of the new international. As internationalists it is the first duty of



comrades Stuart and Cooper to demand of the leadership of the RSL that their position be clarified one way or another: either a unity on the basis of the programme and principles of the Fourth International, or a break with it. But apparently for the American comrades, the political issues and the programme of the Fourth International are of secondary importance: what is of primary importance is “unity.” Thus they stand Bolshevism on its head.

We are for unity, as the record has demonstrated. If we were not prepared to carry through our proposals for unification through to the end, we would not have put ourselves on the record, for instance, as the RSL did for years. We have taken this position, principally because of the attitude of the IS and in order to resolve the problem. But our main job in Britain consists in building the party. That is our duty to the International and to the working class. That remains our decisive criterion. We have no particular “enthusiasm” for unity and never have pretended to. The RSL is hopelessly encrusted in sectarianism. And with our meagre resources in cadres and forces we have to put our energies in the direction where the best results can be achieved for the party in Britain and for the International. The American party did not waste time on the sectarians in America, despite the fact that, as comrade Cooper himself says, they contained “some very good elements”. Yet they continue to pay quite a good deal of attention to Shachtman & Co. Why? Obviously, because despite their incorrect position, they still retain a number of good rank and file elements.

The fact that the RSL is nominally the official section, does not alter anything fundamental. Their political position, though more confused, is basically that of Oehler. The bulk of the RSL membership are not industrial workers. So that the problem of winning over the Bolshevik elements they might have in their ranks, must remain a subordinate one. The potential Bolshevik elements among the sectarians in America had to be sacrificed because more and better Bolsheviks could be won and trained from fresh elements among the mass of the workers, and indeed, with less expenditure of energy. The position is precisely the same in Britain. We are prepared to devote a minimum of activity to the solution of the problem. The American comrades say: “You are only for the record.” Yes, we are for the record. But what does this mean? We have stated our terms for unification and these we are prepared to carry out.

But this “for the record” position has two sides. We have to ask ourselves: are the American comrades who write to us for “unity” and “internationalism” “for the record”? We receive one document from an American comrade hysterically calling for “unity” without adding anything to how the problem is to be solved except by a change of heart. The TO receives another letter putting forward the idea of an entirely unprincipled split. One letter is “open”; the other is secret. We can understand the position of comrade Cooper, perhaps, in a young comrade carried away with enthusiasm. Though it would be the duty of the party leadership to use tact and curb such an outburst. But the position of Stuart is inexcusable.

Comrade Stuart arrived in Britain with the unalterable banner of “democratic centralism” and of “unity” as the principle above time and space. It was with this argument that he prevented the unification of those who stood on the same political platform. We pointed out the falsity of this position. A unification of the TO with ourselves need not prevent further discussion with the RSL on the problem of unity, and indeed would assist in clarifying the question. The TO would have become integrated with our organisation; the general movement would have had a fillip. Under comrade Stuart’s influence the TO was prevented from doing so. And the result? A shift in their political positions; expulsions of those who agree with WIL politically; fusion with those who have opposed WIL’s policy for years. Unity discussions with the ultra-lefts, whom comrade Stuart correctly termed “maniacs.” A most enlightening example of how to educate young people in the principles of democratic centralism!

We cannot but remark in passing, that nearly every letter that arrives from the States, like some King Charles’ head, the name of Lawrence appears as a subject of praise. This method of ballyhoo and advertisement – or as it is termed in the United States – “a build up”, on the “key man” principle, is certainly not the organisational method of Bolshevism, but savours more of bourgeois publicity methods. In comrade Cooper’s document we see the statement: “L. is a Bolshevik of high calibre who is seeking unity on a principled organisational basis.” Lawrence is a notorious weather-cock, incapable of maintaining a

consistent political position for two days in succession. What is dangerous in the attitude of Cooper and some of the members of the IS is that by incorrectly posing the problem as they do purely as an organisational one, they inevitably leave the door open to political deviations and differences. Already Lawrence has made an unprincipled bloc with three sectarians and now with the ultra-lefts. Cooper makes great play of the “fine group of Bolshevnik elements in the L. wing.” What exactly does comrade Cooper mean with “Bolshevnik”? True it is that there may still be in the RSL and the TO a few worth while comrades who can be won to the methods of Bolshevism. Certainly the method of Stuart has been the means of retarding the possibility of these comrades developing in a healthy proletarian milieu. Many of them have been poisoned and demoralised by the unprincipled clique atmosphere engendered by Stuart, with his stupid assertions [to] a group of green young comrades, that only they knew how to “conduct principled politics” of all the English groups; that these are the “key” Bolshevniks, etc., etc. However, be that as it may, the position in Britain, not from the formal point of view, but from the living reality, is that there are dozens and hundreds of revolutionaries in the Stalinist party and the ILP, of whom half a dozen are worth the whole of the RSL, the Lefts and the TO thrown in for good measure. They may not regard themselves as Trotskyists at the present time, but they will find their way to our ranks if we put forward a correct programme and if they see in our organisation a healthy proletarian milieu, and not a petty bourgeois debating society. If it comes to a question on whom we will work [with] in the present period, a hundred times over, we reply: we prefer the active revolutionaries in the other parties, to the paper “Bolshevniks” and sectarians in the RSL. “By their deeds shall ye know them” is an excellent text. What deeds make the RSL and its factions “Bolshevniks”?

But it is particularly noteworthy to see the perspectives of the leadership of the TO in the future unified organisation. JG writes that the TO must prepare for the maintenance of their fraction inside the fused organisation – as the watchdogs of the IS! JC of the TO stresses the need to maintain their fraction to prepare for “minor battles” inside the unified organisation, etc. Thus they prepare for “unification” along the lines of Stuart’s advice, who wrote to the TO:

“In all likelihood there will be a withdrawal of recognition from the RSL and a

period of testing in which all three groups will be regarded as sympathetic. After the testing period there will probably be convoked a unification conference for a final settlement of the question. The TO's programme presages a long term perspective, however, and it should prepare to maintain itself on this programme for a considerable time to come, no matter what organisational turns the situation may take."

Stuart says "a consistently false line on organisational questions (we refer you to the history of the Abern group[34] in the SWP) cannot fail to have in the end a disastrous effect on a group's attitude to programme and tactics." Yes. This is precisely true, as we see from the results of the incorrect organisational tactics in relation to the RSL as well as the TO. But see whither Stuart has developed! He began with the sacredness of "unity"; he ends up with the advocacy of unprincipled splits!

Perhaps one of the mistakes that the WIL has made in the past was not going into the question of the "unification" of 1938 and its results. It certainly provides an example for all time, of the consequences of light-minded unity, leading to light-minded splits. This in itself could be the only fruitful result of a discussion arising from comrade Cooper's letter: political lessons or genuine organisational conclusions, there are none. The unity of the party is a precious thing. Only people who are criminally light-minded would break the unity of the organisation which has been built by painstaking efforts and sacrifice on the part of the membership. But to believe that a recognition of this fact would in itself be a guarantee against the possibility of splits in the future, is to reason not as a dialectician, but as a formalist and idealist. The unity of the party is guaranteed not at all by solemn assurances pledging against splits, but by the programme on the one side, and loyalty to the organisation on the other. The fact [is] that the participants in the 1938 "Peace and unity agreement" "...mutually pledged themselves before the membership and before the Fourth International... to work together in harmonious collaboration laying aside like principled Bolsheviks all personal animosities and antagonisms, and refraining from factionalism, and especially from any kind of factional organisation, during the six months period allotted to the new Executive Committee..." This pledge to the Fourth International, did not prevent three splits before the six months were up. And

how could it? It is significant in this regard, that there have been no breakaways or splits in the WIL, while the history of the “unified” organisation is an interminable and unseemly one of splits and further splits.

We could not guarantee in advance that there will be no serious disagreements, or even splits in the future in WIL. We do not think so. Serious Bolsheviks do not split easily from a genuine Bolshevik organisation unless the issues are of such a character as to reveal a profound social divergence. But again, it is impossible to view this problem in the abstract. We have to take the time, the conditions, developments, size of the party, etc., etc., into consideration. Many factors play their part which cannot be evaluated in advance. Here we would point out that, despite the metaphysical approach of comrade Cooper, the American party, no more than WIL, is guaranteed in advance against the danger of split. And if comrade Cooper would say otherwise, he would be an idiot.

It is instructive in this regard to note that Shachtman, one of the leaders of the latest split in the American party, wrote a very witty and informative article a few years back, in which he depicted the fate of the splitters. This did not stop him from joining their ranks. The solution to this problem does not merely lie in warning against the danger of split, but to quote comrade Cooper:

“The methods of a democratic centralist party that democratically arrives at decisions and carries its decisions into action in a disciplined manner, and later, democratically decided again to carry same or other decisions into action (and so on round the democratic centralist circle), are the only methods that can carry the party through all its tasks and to its final victory.”

Here, we might suggest to comrade Cooper that he once again direct his remarks to the right address – the factions of the RSL. Certainly light-minded unity would and does lead inevitably to splits precisely when it is opposed to the conception of the party and to democratic centralism.

WIL has had disagreements in its ranks, sometimes serious disagreements. There will be disagreements in the future as well. But the majority will decide. There is as little, or as much, possibility of a split in the WIL, as there is in the SWP. No more no less. Precisely because WIL, like the SWP, is based on the programme and the policy of the Fourth International and on the principles of democratic centralism.

So far we have seen the prediction of the WIL, and the methods of the WIL on the question of unification and splits, justified up to the hilt by the development of events. Is it an accident that the “unity” ended in such a speedy and inglorious debacle? Of course not! Theoretically in advance the WIL document said:

“The new Revolutionary Socialist League is founded on a compromise with sectarianism, and arising out of the political compromise there is naturally a dual organisational structure. The membership is left free to decide, each for himself, the milieu of work; the principle of centralism is thrown overboard, and with it any pretence of democratic discipline. In effect, the new RSL consists of two organisations masquerading under a single name, a state of affairs that cannot be hidden from the outside world, even if internal friction is sufficiently overcome to enable the organisation to begin to function.”

There were other reasons as well, of course, both practical and theoretical, for the debacle. But the caricature put forward by comrade Cooper as the attitude of the WIL – “I’m king – Recognise me!” – reveals a superficial approach to the problem. “Democratic centralism” is not an end in itself, but a means to the building of the party. But WIL never has “learned”, and we hope never will learn, the method of cynical and light-minded unification, without preparation and without discussion. The “democratic centralists” didn’t succeed in building the party in Britain. But the WIL, which has not learned the “tried and tested methods”, did succeed. Does this mean to say there is something wrong with democratic centralism? Nothing of the sort. It means that the collapse of the RSL can be traced to the fact that it was not based on the Bolshevik conception of the

party and democratic centralism.

Unity too, is not an end in itself, but must be the means to the building of the party. Nor is the party an end in itself, but a means towards the seizure of power. In this connection, we might add that it is not “unity”, but the programme and policy, which is decisive. We might remind comrade Cooper that, despite its democratic centralist basis, in the epoch of reaction the Bolshevik Party suffered a whole series of splits. This was, of course, due to the pressure of reaction, which was reflected in the ranks of the Bolsheviks. It is to the point too, that the history of Bolshevism began with a split over an important, but minor issue. Trotsky’s mistake up to 1917 was precisely his insistence on “unity” with the Mensheviks.

Comrade Cooper might say, how can we compare the struggle between Bolshevism and Menshevism with the struggle between RSL and WIL, since both claim an allegiance to the Fourth International? We would point out that the differences between Bolshevism and Menshevism also began when both formally gave their allegiance to the same cause and the same International, and the divergences in the beginning were not of a fundamental character.

But Lenin, who stood against “unity” was correct in 1912, as he was in 1917 when he opposed Stalin and Kamenev who advocated unity with the Mensheviks. If we accept comrade Cooper’s description of the crisis in the Bolshevik Party in 1917 (it is not at all an accurate picture, but it would lead us too far afield to deal with events as they developed) what follows? More banalities. The unity of the party must be preserved. We must allow differences of opinion. You must not break party discipline, etc., etc. Excellent! But what exactly is comrade Cooper supposed to be teaching us? His conclusion from this is through and through false:

“In England today the WIL ‘prepares’ for similar party conditioning and maintaining in [a] time of real crisis – by completely avoiding a democratic

centralist solution of the present divisional crisis! How is the WIL going to know how to maintain the party, the precious instrument of the revolution, in [a] time of real crisis, when it never learned how to resolve a party crisis previously (in 1938) and persists in refusing to resolve the present divisional crises!”

Poor comrade Cooper obviously has no inkling of what developed in Britain from 1938. We recommend him to study the record. Certainly we would say in advance, we would never participate in another 1938. Not under any circumstances. We would never agree to a violation of the principles of democratic centralism with the rich lessons of the results of this before our eyes. By what right does comrade Cooper say that we are “completely avoiding” a democratic centralist solution? He should provide the evidence for this. Once again the “record” speaks against comrade Cooper. Far from avoiding it, the WIL intends to insist on a democratic centralist solution to the problem, and we are insisting now that the problem be viewed in this light. We are all for a movement that will stand up to the shocks of future events. Certainly we are determined that it will not be on the model of the RSL of 1938. If the RSL never even began the task of building the revolutionary party, one of the organisational reasons can be traced to the unification of 1938.

In reality the whole method of comrade Cooper in his approach to this problem is false. The splits and divisions which have taken place in the Trotskyist movement in Britain and throughout the world have been no accident. Our international movement has been marked by splits in nearly every country where we had sections, without exception, including the Soviet Union where presumably the Opposition was educated in the methods and principles of democratic centralism perhaps better than any cadres of any party in history. The centrists, with their formless “unity” without principles and without perspectives, and without Marxist understanding, have used the argument of the “innumerable splits” within the Trotskyist movement, as a proof of the fact that the Trotskyists are incapable of building a movement. Others have argued that it was all due to “democratic centralism” as was the degeneration of the Russian revolution. This of course, is as false as the arguments of comrade Cooper. The splits did not fall from the skies. They came as a direct consequence of the epoch of reaction which followed the defeat of the revolution in Europe, ushering in



Thermidor in Russia with its consequent reaction throughout the world. This reaction destroyed a whole generation of revolutionaries reared by the Comintern. But the degeneration of the old internationals could not but affect also the young and weak forces of the Fourth International as well. Isolated from the labour movement, persecuted by reaction, developing under the hard and difficult conditions of the defeats of the proletariat, even large sections of the elements which formed the International Left Opposition were bound to succumb, as did the Opposition in Russia, to the pressure of the unfavourable historical circumstances. The elements which began the work of the opposition, even in the majority, were not of the best material. The difficulties of growth and the milieu in which they had to work; the composition of the Opposition itself; the different stages of development through which the organisation passed; the necessity at various stages of making sharp changes if the movement was even to survive; all these factors led necessarily and inevitably to the splits. A movement, no more than society itself, cannot move forward without crises and even without splits.

There is nothing surprising in this. It is according to the laws of history. But this pertains not to the history of Trotskyism, or even to the history of the party, but to its pre-history. We are now entering a new period, a period when fresh forces and fresh cadres will be decisive for our movement. Not for nothing did the Old Man point out for the movement in France that the old leadership had been developed in a period of reaction and isolation from the labour movement and were inevitably moulded and conditioned by this in their outlook and psychology. A great part of the leadership were incapable of adapting themselves to the tasks which lay ahead. The revolutionary wave would produce fresh cadres and fresh leaders who could alone provide the backbone for the leadership of the party and lead the masses to victory. This applies not only to France but internationally.

The new stage of the movement was presaged by the founding of the Fourth International and the development of the Transitional programme. A new period for the building of genuine mass parties opens up for the Fourth International. Parties which can only be built on the basis of the mass programme of the Fourth International, of which the transitional and military programmes form an integral

part. Anyone who slurs over these absolute prerequisite for the building of the Fourth International shows an un-Marxian attitude towards the programme and principles of Bolshevism. Not for nothing did Trotsky say that “toleration” of the sectarians and sectarian policies within the ranks of the Fourth International would be disastrous. Without a clarification of the political position in Britain all arguments on organisational questions are fruitless. Indeed, if not connected with the political problems, are actually harmful and can do great damage.

In this connection it is very instructive to note that comrade Cooper misinterprets the history of his own party. He holds up the bogey of the horrible results of the splits in America as a warning to the WIL. And we agree that the examples do not make a pretty picture. But the WIL has always agreed on condemnation of these splinter groups and have always supported the stand of the American party against them. But what is alarming, is that in discussing these splits, comrade Cooper looks only at the organisational question and completely ignores the political basis of the splits. Here, as always, it is the political criterion that is decisive. These groups had a wrong political estimate of the situation, it was their policies which led to split, further splits among themselves, and ultimate extinction. Extraordinary! But nowhere in comrade Cooper’s document it is made clear that it was the wrong orientation of all these groups which differed politically from the Fourth International, which led to their doom.

Many times we have listened patiently to some of the American comrades as they unfolded the sorry tale of sections which split from the American party, the history of which we were not unfamiliar [with]. But we were struck by the fact that the American comrades were quite unaware that whereas the movement in America is a good example of the results of unprincipled splits, the movement in Britain is an even better example of the results of unprincipled and light-minded “unifications.” The political tendencies of Oehlerism, etc., found full flower within the RSL. And if it is splits the comrades wish to study, there is no need to cross the Atlantic. For every split in America, we can show them two or three in the “unified” British section. As comrade Healy used to be so fond of saying: “Comrade Cannon came to Britain and unified four groups into seven.”[35]

But here again, we would not adopt the attitude of comrade Cooper. There is no absolute rule on this question. We have to examine the problem in a dialectical way, not in a formalistic fashion. We cannot a priori and in advance, condemn every split automatically, merely because it was a split. We have to analyse the political basis and the social meaning of the split. If there had been powerful parties of the Fourth International throughout the world the problem would obviously be posed in an entirely different way. But then we would have been faced with entirely different tasks. In the past period, as today, the main problem was to prepare the building of the party, of transforming a sect into a party. The first prerequisite for this was to rid ourselves of the corroding influence of sectarianism. In this connection, we would say that it was the weakness and immaturity of the Fourth International, coupled with the terrible pressure of the reaction, which produced these splits. However, these splits cannot be conceived as an unmitigated evil. On the contrary, it was thus that the real cadres of the movement were educated, and a clear understanding of the role of the party, the tasks, and the political problems, were gained.

Let us examine the problem in the light of the developments of the International Left Opposition and the Fourth International. If we accepted the metaphysical absolutes of comrade Cooper, we would have to condemn Trotsky and the Fourth International as “unprincipled splitters”. Relying on memory, in Belgium in 1929 there was a split in the Trotskyist party. At that time Chiang Kai-shek was trying to seize the Chinese Eastern Railway in Manchuria, in which Russia had half-share (having previously ceded a half-share to the Chinese). Encouraged and incited by world imperialism he launched attacks on the Russian troops guarding the railway, and bloody collisions began to take place. There was danger of war. The majority of the Belgian Trotskyists condemned the Soviet Union in their official organ and supported China as a colonial country. The minority refused to distribute the party press which contained attacks on the attitude of the Soviet Union, and instead distributed a paper which they immediately rushed out. Thus a split took place. Trotsky and the International naturally, gave full support to the minority, and were correct in doing so.

Here we would like to deal with the position developed by comrade Stuart who points to the fact that Trotsky consistently stood for the reform of the

Communist International up to 1933. He uses this analogy in justifying the directives which he gave to the TO as a “principled” question. His statement is perfectly correct. The sectarians, who insisted in 1928-33 in attempting to build “independent” parties, suffered dismal failures. But comrade Stuart, this too was not an eternal and unalterable principle, but was dictated by the objective situation. There is no need to go into any long or involved discussions on the question. One fact is sufficient to refute Stuart’s position. Apparently he does not know the history of his own party. Trotsky suggested in the early days of the Communist League of America, while other sections of the International Left Opposition stood for the reform of the Communist International, that the American comrades should launch out on the road of the independent party and prepare to compete with the CP in America. He did this, because of the weakness of the American CP, the freshness of the American workers, etc. To a different situation corresponded a different tactic. Thus the alleged “principle” on which Stuart based himself is revealed as a phoney. Cooper and Stuart might argue that the formal founding of the Fourth International alters the situation. But this too has already been answered by history.

All this nonsense about “absolute” principles on the question of “unity” is revealed by a very recent example. In France after the founding conference of the Fourth International, i.e. after the 1938 unity conference, in 1939 there was a split. The split was over a purely tactical question. One section wished to work as an independent party, the other insisted on the necessity of entry into the PSOP (the French ILP). We believe that the latter was in the minority. How to solve the problem? Why not all in one party, operating two tactics as in 1938? If it was a question of “Bolshevik principles” for Britain, why not for France? According to the latest prescription the minority should have been sternly condemned. But Trotsky and the International believed that the minority position was the correct one. The solution to the problem was that both groups remained within the Fourth International, while temporarily they separated in order to work out the tactics in practice. Trotsky believed that they would come together after a period had lapsed, and the results of the tactic of entry one way or another would have been worked out and demonstrated. There is nothing opposed to democratic centralism in this. Or is there?

To come nearer home. In Britain in 1933 there was a difference of opinion over the question of entry into the ILP and the so-called “independent” tactic put forward by the sectarians. Trotsky had advised correctly, entry into the ILP, which was in a state of flux and moving towards the left, as the only possibility of achieving results and preventing ossification and collapse. The sectarians were in a majority. Moreover, they comprised the leadership and the most experienced comrades. Yet Trotsky advised the young and less experienced comrades to enter the ILP. The path of the majority of the Communist League was suicidal and indicated their complete inability to face up the tasks. There could only be one thing to do. The minority entered the ILP. Were they correct in “splitting”, comrades? We refer you to the father of the split, comrade Trotsky.

Stuart admitted that had he arrived a few days later and the pending unification of the TO and the WIL had taken place, he would have been forced to accept the new position, as that would have been a “different situation.” So much for the sacred “principles” of democratic centralism.

However, these few examples suffice to show that the problem of “unity” and of split are not settled by shouts of “Unity! Unity!”. Our exceptional historical difficulties on an international scale have precisely been because in not one country have we possessed a mass party, and only in ideological struggle have the differing and heterogeneous elements which inevitably composed the beginnings of our movement, been tested and the wheat selected from the chaff.

It is instructive to observe the evolution of the different tendencies in Britain. Far from the WIL evolving in a direction politically hostile to the Fourth International, it has been the official section which has been evolving more and more politically away from the Fourth International. And not at all accidentally.

The evolution of the TO is a classic example of what happens to a tendency which raises the organisational above the political questions. By preventing a unification of the TO with those who were in political agreement with it, the TO

landed in a blind alley. Quite unable to justify the completely unjustifiable split with the WIL, they developed political differences with the WIL and began to engage in the most shameless political horse-deals. And their evolution has just begun! Thus do unprincipled politics recoil on the heads of those who act blindly and empirically. In Stuart's letter we see the full results developed to an unprincipled position in the most startling fashion. His letter constitutes a model of where an incorrect stand on an organisational question and an incorrect understanding on the methods of democratic centralism, can lead. After preventing the fusion of the TO with WIL for what he claimed was a "principled" position – "to split from the RSL was unprincipled" – he ends up, after the inevitable fiasco, with advocating the formation of another Trotskyist organisation. In other words – precisely a split! Now he says it would be "a caricature of real Bolshevik Leninist discipline" to continue the past tactic. And as a direct result of this directive, the WIL will be faced with the necessity to re-educate the TO in the organisational and political methods of the Fourth International. As comrade Cooper says: "Split is the greatest crime..."

Thus, in the most unprincipled fashion, Stuart discards his alleged principles of yesterday. But an important question arises precisely on this issue: the question of democratic centralism and internationalism. Just think of it! We are now in a pre-revolutionary period in Britain. Stuart claimed that "unity" was the most important problem in Britain. He accuses WIL of not understanding the principles of democratic centralism and internationalism. Certainly he provides a nice example of both. He is a member of the IS. On his personal responsibility he gives a directive "advising" the TO to set up a new organisation and to attack the other sections publicly, directly violating the previous instruction of the IS to the groups. Even if we were to concede for a moment that Stuart were correct in his advice to the TO, by what standards has he the right to give such [a] directive, which leads to action, in a secret letter to the TO? And by what standards of internationalism do two American comrades write to Britain, one addressing WIL in an open letter calling [for] "unity" in a vacuum; the other a secret letter to a faction advising split and a new organisation? If this is what Stuart imagines is democratic centralism, it would be difficult to understand the difference between unprincipled and principled politics.

Even if we accept the argument (which is entirely without foundation) that the WIL split on a “personal” issue; how does it happen that the WIL has built a thriving and living organisation with the correct Bolshevik policy, while the RSL has decayed and disintegrated and finished up on an entirely false position? Does this happen by some mysterious accident? Of course not! Despite the official label, the RSL as a genuine Bolshevik organisation, was always a fiction. If we would seek the theoretical explanation, even apart from the causes dealt with in this polemic, it has been provided by the Old Man:

“An organisation may be signified either because of the mass it embraces or because of the content of those ideas that it is capable of bringing into the workers’ movement...”

“...More than once in history the rift within a lifeless organisation has given an impulse to the progressive development of its viable section...”

If there was nothing else, this in itself would confirm the position of the WIL.

As the record shows, WIL stands for the principled democratic centralist solution to the problem in Britain. We are for unity, but not a fiction of unity at any price. Unity must be on a Bolshevik basis to build the Bolshevik party.

We believe that our Conference Resolution lays the basis for the solution of the problem. Unification will be achieved. A united party on the basis of one policy – the policy of the majority – with full democratic rights for the minority. Our party must not be turned into a discussion club, but into a fighting party of the working class, protected by the application of the principles of democratic centralism.

*Political Bureau, September 11 1943*



# **Our tasks in the coming revolution**

## **Ted Grant's speech at the October 1943 conference of the Workers' International League**

[Workers' International News, Vol. 5 No. 5, January 1944]

I think that the conference today is proof of the fact that we have travelled quite a good distance since our last conference of 14 months ago. The number of delegates, the fresh forces we have at the present time, the fact that we are meeting when the campaign against Trotskyism on the part of the bourgeoisie seems to be on the order of the day – all this indicates the gravity, and the necessity for ourselves, as the vanguard, if we are to be the vanguard of the working class, to take stock of the period through which we have passed in the last 12 months, and of the days, and years, momentous days and years, which we believe lie ahead of us in the coming period.

This document[36] sets out to put, as comrade Trotsky has expressed it, to put in the plainest and most condensed form possible, the basic principles and basic ideas, the underlying conceptions that form our theoretical understanding, and our theoretical attitude towards world events, and towards the tasks of history which are posed in front of the working class, and in front of all toiling humanity at the present time.

The conferences which we hold are not at all like the conferences of the ILP and the Stalinist party, which are held at an exceedingly low level, in which agitational and demagogic speeches are given from the platform. We have to examine events from a world point of view, to take into account the whole world

movement of history itself. We have to examine our conceptions, our programme, our programme in the light of events, and on that basis to restate the fundamental propositions and ideas of Marxism, if, as we believe, they have been proved to be correct in that period.

The first point made in the resolution is the fact that basically the conceptions of Bolshevism and internationalism, as developed by our movement, have been proved correct through the course of the experience of the last decades, and in particular through the course of the experience of the present world war. In the last world war, Lenin had to reformulate the basic ideas of Marxism, and even harden and sharpen them out in correspondence with the changed relationship of forces.

We know that Marx, in the period of the France-Prussian war, had actually supported one group of the bourgeoisie against another group of the bourgeoisie, because of the relatively progressive nature of the tasks of national unification which faced Germany, but that Lenin looked at the First World War as proof of the fact that capitalism was now an outmoded system, that it had ceased to play a progressive role in the development of society, and the development of mankind, and from that analysis Lenin and the Bolsheviks came to the conclusion that it was impossible to support any group of the bourgeoisie.

We see that that conception, which has been developed by Lenin and Trotsky, was proved to be correct in the events which followed during and after the last world war. It came at a time when the proletariat was relatively immature, was not yet in certain senses subjectively prepared for the carrying through of the tasks which society had imposed on its shoulders. As Lenin had foreseen this immaturity was expressed in the fact that even in Tsarist Russia, the overwhelming mass of the people supported their own imperialists.

The crime of the last world war exacted its retribution in the revolution of 1917, and the world revolutionary wave which followed in 1917-1921. We know that

only the Russian proletariat succeeded in solving the problems with which they were faced, nevertheless the fact that this world revolutionary wave affected the entire mass of the population in almost every part of the globe in itself was proof of the fact that capitalism had become a brake on the development of the productive forces, and that it was now the task of the proletariat to inaugurate a new order of society. The national state was completely outmoded by the development of the forces of production.

We know that the period which followed the last world war, despite the calculations of Lenin and Trotsky, was not followed by a series of successful revolutions, as it should have been, and that the main responsibility for the epoch of reaction, of terrible distress, of terrible failures for the world proletariat, rests on the outmoded leadership of the working class, of the Second International on the one side, and the Third International on the other.

During this period, the armistice period, we had, for international socialism, for those who remained true to the tradition of Marxism and Bolshevism, an exceptionally difficult period, a period when they were swimming against the stream, when there was no possibility to do anything else but to prepare the theoretical basis for the formation and building of the new international. We can say, in a certain sense, that mankind has had to pay the price of this new terrible slaughter of the peoples, in the last four years, as a means of preparing, no longer the material basis – that has already been prepared in the decades after the last world war, (and a ready world society relatively, if not absolutely, was materially prepared for the socialist revolution) – that the new defeats and new destruction was necessary, in a certain sense, because of the failure of the old leadership of the working class to train and build up the working class to prepare them to fulfil their historical mission.

The world bourgeoisie regarded the war with horror and dismay. It was their absolute impasse which forced them on to the road of a new slaughter of the peoples, despite the fact that the leadership of the bourgeoisie recognised clearly the consequences which would flow from the movement in the direction of a

new world war.

As a consequence of the terrible shocks which the proletariat has received even with the Italian working class prostrate, the German working class prostrate, the greater part of the world faced with terrible defeats, when this war began we have an entirely different psychological attitude on the part of the masses from that at the outbreak of the last world war. It was greeted with dismay and distress, nowhere in any part of the globe was any great enthusiasm for capitalism manifested, or any support for the ruling class, in Britain, Germany or any other country. The masses of the people had to be dragged to the slaughter, and could only be pushed, precisely because they could see no other course, because for the time being, they saw no other way out than support of their own ruling class.

The terrible period of reaction through which mankind has passed during the last 20 years, perhaps the worst in the history of the working class, all this resulted in the degeneration of those who did not base themselves in full on the strength of the proletariat and its forces, those who looked with irony, with distrust, with scepticism to the proletariat. The Stalinists, the Labour leaders, the Burnhamites, all claimed at one time to stand on the platform of world revolution; all turned and pointed to the apparent apathy and sheepishness of the working class, who in the first, second, third, and apparently fourth years of the war were completely passive.

We know that the Old Man[37] had believed that the Second World War would not last so long as the first, because the revolution would come. This was falsified by events, and sceptics have taken this as proof of the incapacity of the working class. The revolutionary Marxists, although our forces were small, although we had been subjected to the terrible pressure of the reaction, in building up our forces – and we can say that this war is a result of the immaturity of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat – nevertheless, we and we alone understand the profound process of change that was taking place within the ranks of the apparently apathetic and cowed working class.

Looking below the surface, we can see that a similar process, except now on a world scale, was taking place as took place in Russia after the defeat of 1905. The revolution was defeated, and for a number of years reaction raged. The Bolshevik Party and all the forces of the working class were shattered. It took a number of years before they could recover, and by 1912-14, they had moved forward once again in the direction of the revolution of October.

So, on a world scale, we can see the same process taking place underneath the whip of reaction. We can see that the mass of the population of the entire globe was pushing forward in the direction of revolution, that the events of the war were preparing the way for a new revolutionary upsurge, a new swing on the part of the proletariat, which would dwarf even the wonderful revolutionary wave of 1917-21.

If we examine the question from the point of view of exactly what forces are at the disposal of the bourgeoisie on a world scale, if we examine the question from the potentialities which the bourgeoisie possess to solve the world crisis, the death agony of capitalism, what do we see? During the course of the war itself, all the forces are being speeded up for a mighty wave of revolt on the part of the masses. War, as well as revolution, has always been the locomotive of history. Despite this, the bourgeoisie on a world scale has been compelled to place the proletariat in a position where they can be revitalised and renewed. Millions of unemployed, demoralised by years of reaction and defeat, have been placed either into the Army or into industry. The proletariat, the living force of the revolution, has been renewed and revitalised in the course of the war.

The middle class, too has been under the impact of war. The concentration of capital into a few giant monopolies, observed by Lenin in the last world war, has reached almost its greatest pitch in this.

It is gathering up speed. The middle class is being ruined, not only in the countries of the west, but even in India. In Germany, under the brutal regime of Hitler, the middle class has been practically wiped out, the very class which provided a basis for fascism. In Britain, an acceleration in its ruin is now taking place.

The contradictions which compelled the imperialists to go to war, far from finding a solution, are actually aggravated. Britain entered the war to maintain her failing hold on her empire, to retain the markets of the world. The result has been that she has lost everything. That is not only the plight of Britain. The productive forces of America alone have increased at least 30 to 40% during the course of the war. The same applies to other countries. For world imperialism it is impossible to solve the contradiction between the productive forces and the national state and private ownership of the means of production.

From a psychological point of view, during the course of the fourth year, a turning point has been reached in the war, in the revolution in Europe, and we might add, in the revolution in Britain. We get the situation where, after 20 years of fascism, and the rule of monopoly capitalism in Italy, in 48 hours the Italian proletariat has shown its strength, the Italian proletariat has shown its potentialities. Overnight, soviets have appeared in Italy, a workers' militia has appeared, the masses have moved instinctively in the channels of revolution. It is merely the first break in the chain of world capitalism. It is just the beginning.

Hitler can see the foreshadowing of his own fate in the fate of Mussolini. We can see that the factors making for the world revolution, for the success of the proletariat, has reached a new stage of development, far more mature and developed than 25 years ago. With the coming fall of Hitler, the revolution in Germany, what possible basis will the bourgeoisie have in Europe? In all Europe today there is not one single army, including the British, which can be relied upon for the purpose of counter-revolution. In the world there is only one that can be relied on, and that probably only for a short time, and that is the army of American imperialism. Every country, every single nation in Europe will be

defeated. We get the whole character of the epoch, of the change in the social relationship, revealed in the fact that mighty imperialist states change sides with no more ceremony than a Balkan principality would have done in the last world war. France and Italy have changed sides. Every country will be defeated.

Even if we assume that the Allies succeed with the aid of the Stalinist counter-revolutionaries, in imposing their will on Europe, what will be the outcome? The American and British soldiers will be fired by the European revolution. Even today, with all the forces of repression at his disposal, Hitler cannot prevent 100 illegal newspapers in the small countries of Europe. How can the bourgeoisie hold down Europe?

And that is not all their problem. They still have Asia to deal with. There is a psychological preparation for revolution on the part of the proletariat in Asia. Once the revolution begins, it will spread from one country to another, from one continent to another. There is no possibility whatever for the stabilisation of capitalism, on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.

One of the main factors in the revolutionisation of Europe and the world is the wonderful resistance and victories of the Red Army, victories for the ideas of the October revolution, testimony of the strength of October which still remains in soviet Russia today. These victories, which world imperialism did not count on, pave the way for tremendous revolutions in Europe, and the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy as well. The revolution will inevitably sweep over the frontiers into the Soviet Union, and the masses there will soon deal with the corrupt bureaucracy which has now gone over to the position of pure Bonapartism, where they lean on the military club ("Marshal" Stalin) and the spiritual club (the restoration of the Church), based on the backward masses of the peasantry, to hold the working class in check.

Revolution for Asia is inevitable. In the first stages, in Europe, the gangsters of Stalinism and Social Democracy, who paved the way for reaction, will inevitably

find themselves at the head of the masses. That is according to the laws of history.

Events repeat themselves, in that sense we will have a repetition of events after the last world war, but now on an entirely different basis. It is sure that it will not be long-lasting. The Social Democrats split, and prepared the way for the regeneration of the vanguard in the Communist International. The Communist International will be raised to the crest of the wave in Europe – that is the most likely development – but the misunderstanding of the masses that these people represent Communism will soon be dissipated, and the CP will split into pieces, paving the way for the Fourth International, paving the way for the conquest of power by the workers of the world.

When we turn to the situation in Britain we see that the British working class, and we, as its vanguard, have been exceedingly lucky in the favourable development of events. We can say without a shadow of doubt that in Britain today there is the most favourable outlook for revolution in any country in Europe, or the world. In Britain today, all the objective conditions for the possibility of the conquest of power by the proletariat are actually in existence at the present time. While we are meeting, we see a strike wave up and down the country, and if we are to understand the significance of the strike wave; if we are to understand the significance of the development of events here, we have to turn our attention to the developments that were taking place before the war.

At last year's conference we pointed out how already before the war had begun, the British proletariat was moving in the direction of the social revolution, was moving towards civil war, and towards the conquest of power, and we based this on certain small strikes taking place at that period. In every single case, the trade union bureaucracy, who had become integrated into the capitalist machine, lost complete control of the development of events, lost control of the working class. In every case, the working class instinctively took the correct steps.



The sober bourgeois press at that time, with ourselves, were the only ones who understood the significance of these events. Immediately they issued a warning to the union bureaucracy that unless they restored control, unless they could keep their men in check, then they would have to resort to other methods. The war itself apparently interrupted this development of events. In this war, up to the present year, we have had less strikes, less industrial disputes on the part of the working class than took place in the last imperialist war. There was a complete lull in the class struggle – or that seemed to be the position on the surface – but the very calm, the very fact that the masses were not moving in the direction of struggle was far from indicating the strength of British imperialism, that we were in for a period of stable conservative development, but that the period we were entering was entirely opposite.

If we examine the reason underlying why the mighty working class was so quiescent, one of the reasons is that the conditions of the working class as compared with the last world war are probably much better. At the other side was the fact that the mass of the workers, with their hatred of fascism, could not see any other alternative, that the treachery of the Labour bureaucrats in going over to the side of the capitalists, and later the treachery of the Stalinists, imposed exceptional difficulties in the way of the movement of the working class.

But already with the victories and the improved position of Britain, we get the situation that the mass of the working class have taken the victories of the Red Army and even the British victories, as their victories, in the sense that it frees their hands for the struggle against the enemy at home. It is an interesting fact that as Britain has gained victories, at a time when in the last war it would have been a period of chauvinist intoxication, the masses have moved against the ruling class.

Today we have a series of strikes; the biggest since the general strike of 1926. The working class is girding itself for the struggle against the bosses. The strikes in Barrow and the Clyde, all this indicates the profound process of change, the

fundamental change in the psychology of the masses. There is not one single industry in which the working class is not seething with industrial unrest. Not only that, the material basis of British imperialism is shattered beyond hope of repair; they are the satellite of American imperialism. As the workers begin to sense that the war is approaching its close, they are not particularly concerned about the struggle against Japan, the masses are preparing for the mighty industrial sweep which will push completely into the background the struggles of 1926.

On the other side, the middle class is completely ruined, and is even looking towards the left, looking towards the social revolution. Common Wealth is an indication of the complete failure of the working class leaders to give a lead to the middle class, in their tremendous push towards the left. That process is taking place in front of our eyes today. The ruling class has less basis in the mass of the population than at any other time in history; even during the General Strike, they could still rely on a large section of the middle class.

The middle class is moving towards the revolution. The whole character of social relations is completely changed. For 100 years, the mighty Tory Party has stood like a rock, a rock of reaction, remaining while the Liberals were shattered. In Britain today, the basis for conservatism is finished. It rested on Britain's privileged position among the nations. Britain is now a second-rate satellite of American imperialism, and with this we see a complete change in the psychology of the masses. The Tories are losing support in by-elections, not only in industrial areas, but also in the rural constituencies. It is possible that in the post-war general election, Churchill might succeed in getting a snap victory, and gain a majority for a national government or the Conservative Party. That is not excluded, but even if that should take place, it will not alter the course of events. All that it will mean is that the struggle will immediately assume an extra-parliamentary form. Such a government would not last one or at the most a couple of years.

Even to talk about fascism in the coming period would be ridiculous. The ruling

class has no basis for setting up reaction. That is if the leadership came forward with a fighting policy. The Gallup Poll reveals that there is a Labour majority, in spite of the reactionary policy of its leadership. Inevitably the Labour leaders will be taken by the scruff of the neck, and thrust into power by the masses.

But the position is even better than that, because this movement is only taking place because the mass of the working class do not see and do not have any real alternative. We get the amazing development of events that there is more hatred for the union bureaucrats and the Labour leaders, among the ranks of the advanced workers today than at any period in history. The moment the Labour Party comes to power will be already its period of decline, of splitting and breaking up. There is more socialist consciousness, a more radical attitude on the part of the masses, than at any other period in history. The armed forces are more revolutionary, look more to the working class and socialism than even the ranks of the working class themselves. That class-consciousness is expressed in the fact that, in relation to the Negro and Indian questions we see solidarity between the Army and the working class.

We have a victorious Army in North Africa, and Italy, and I say, yes, Long live the Eighth Army, because that is our army. One of our comrades has spoken to a number of people who have had letters from the Eighth Army soldiers, showing their complete dissatisfaction. We know of incidents in the Army, Navy and other forces that have never been reported, and that it is impossible for us to report. It is our Eighth Army that is being hammered and tested and being organised for the purpose of changing the face of the world. This applies equally to all the forces.[38]

But we have been given an even greater gift than our comrades on the continent. We are far more fortunate in the sense that long in advance, before the revolution has begun, Stalinism has revealed itself as a dread disease, the syphilis of the working class. To tens of thousands of workers, whom we have not been in connection with and are not in connection with at the moment, its counter-revolutionary role has been revealed by its strike-breaking attitude. The militants

have been inoculated against this disease. This gives us an opportunity to train and prepare. The Stalinists will still gain, but the votes they have are not votes for Stalinism, but for communism, for the revolution. In the more backward strata they will play a tremendous role in the period opening up. The ILP is gaining tremendous support, as a reflection of the radicalisation of the workers.

The ILP will reveal its centrist nature, show that it is incapable of facing up to events, as they have already shown in regard to the Italian revolution. From their ranks we will gain tremendous forces.

Industry is the key to the situation. Bevin and the trade union bureaucracy have already given testimony to the correctness of our point of view, in the fact that already in the initial stages of the Militant Workers' Committee[39], they are threatening action against it, and against us. They remember the experience of the last world war. Perhaps even more than their masters, they have recognised the danger of such a movement for them. Bevin thinks he will destroy the movement by arresting and battering down the strikers; we know that it will have the opposite effect. It is certain that we will gain our best supporters among the industrial militants. That will be the recruiting ground.

The most encouraging and important point of all – when the war began we were an entirely insignificant sect. No-one noticed or bothered about us. We were still in the stage of complete isolation from the masses. That has completely altered. Today we are a tendency, a significant tendency in the life of the working class. The attacks of the Stalinists, the Labour leaders and the bourgeoisie reflect the fact that our small forces have succeeded, to a certain extent, in orienting themselves correctly and integrating themselves into the movement of the working class. Whether repression will be imposed upon us, or we can succeed in maintaining our organisation as a legal organisation, and our leadership without arrest – in the long run this will not make the slightest difference.

Wonderful days. Wonderful possibilities open up in front of us. You can feel

revolution in the air. That attitude must permeate our conference. The correctness of our viewpoint should give us confidence in preparing ourselves for our role in the coming revolution. Whatever its fate may be, it is certain that we can, we must, we will play our part, and stamp our tendency as an influence, as a serious factor in the situation, as an organisation that will play its part in the revolution. When, twelve months ago, we called our thesis “Preparing for Power”, this was not a mad gesture. That is the serious problem with which we are faced. The objective situation poses for the British working class the imperative task of taking control. We know that this will transform the situation.

The British working class has the finest fighting forces at the present time. Given a fighting lead, they could push the bourgeoisie aside without resistance. We know that the revolution will not be so easy because of the treachery of the leadership. But we have the possibility of transforming ourselves into the mass party of the socialist revolution into the organisation of the British working class.

We know the alternative. The fate of France will be the fate of Britain. The very life of the proletariat is at stake. Britain will be destroyed if the revolution does not succeed. A great part of the population will be surplus.

Our conference, which is far more representative than that of last year, has to go back with the enthusiasm which understanding gives, to prepare to push forward on the basis of our document, and prepare to integrate ourselves with the masses of the workers, as the only guarantee against repression, and to prepare the working class for its historic role in the coming British revolution.

# **The world revolution and the tasks of the British working class**

**By Ted Grant**

[\[40\]](#)

[Workers' International News, Special issue, October 1943]

## **Our principles stood the test**

The outbreak of the second world imperialist war did not descend upon the peoples of the world without warning.

Already through the war of 1914-1918, world imperialism had demonstrated that it had ceased to perform a progressive function in world economic and social development, and had become a reactionary fetter on the development of the productive, social and cultural forces of the world. The revolutionary communists assimilated the lessons of this manifestation of imperialist decay and drew the lessons in their programme.

Analysing this period the two outstanding theoreticians of the Bolshevik movement, Lenin and Trotsky, demonstrated that the capitalist fetters on production aggravated by national boundaries of capitalist states and world empires, would inevitably give rise to a new world war if the workers failed to

overthrow the capitalist system and establish a new socialist order. They demonstrated that the most important problem facing the workers was to unify Europe economically and politically, for upon this depended the future economic and cultural development of the workers of the world. Should the unification of Europe be left in the hands of capitalism, it would usher in a period of barbaric oppression and be but the prelude to a world conflict between capitalist Europe and American imperialism.

This thesis has been tragically confirmed by the experiences of our generation. The failure of the working class to weld Europe together was due, in the main, to the treachery of the leadership of the social democratic and Stalinist parties. In control of the mass organisations which alone were capable of defeating reaction, they capitulated to the Nazis in Germany without firing a shot or attempting to rally the working class for a decisive battle. By their policy of coalition with the capitalists in the Popular Front, they betrayed the revolution in France and in Spain. It was thus that the reactionary unification of Europe through enslavement was undertaken by the Nazis who sought to organise “the new order in Europe.”

With the rise of nationalist revisionism in the Communist International under the cloak of “socialism in one country”, it was left to the communist internationalists to continue the revolutionary traditions and principles of Bolshevism, under the leadership of Trotsky. In a series of theses, resolutions and programmatic documents, the fourth internationalists established their Bolshevick-Leninist heritage.

In contrast to the Stalinists and the reformists of all shades, the Fourth International warned: neither the League of Nations nor the so-called “peace blocs” could prevent the impending imperialist war; only the proletarian revolution could crush the preparations for the coming bloodbath and imperialist intervention against the Soviet Union, and ensure peace in Europe and the world. We pledged ourselves to the defence of the Soviet Union and to a principled opposition to the war in all the capitalist countries alike. No support for the

governments of the ruling class; no support for the conduct of their war. The class struggle is the motive power of progress in war time as in peace time.

Whilst the social democrats, Labourites and Stalinists allied themselves to their imperialist rulers at the outbreak of war, the Trotskyists continued the revolutionary socialist struggle against the capitalists in their own countries, fascist and democratic. They confidently based themselves upon the inevitability of the imperialist war giving place to proletarian revolution with the upsurge of revolutionary enthusiasm among the workers.

Four years of war have served to test and re-establish the correctness of the Marxist analysis of war and revolution.

Workers' International League reaffirms these basic ideas: we do not change our course. Our task is to assimilate the Marxist method, to translate the ideas of the Fourth International into action in the upheavals and storms which tomorrow brings.

## **War gives rise to revolution**

We have now entered a new stage in the international situation. The imperialist war has given rise to the first of a series of proletarian uprisings and revolutions.

The inglorious exit of Mussolini from the stage of history, the collapse of fascism throughout Italy after 20 years, the initiative which the Italian workers have already shown in the first stages of the revolution in the spontaneous setting up of workers' committees (soviets): all these events indicate that a new period of mass struggles and political alignments is opening up in Europe and



the world.

Side by side with the antagonism of the imperialist states, there is the class antagonism of all the imperialists to the Soviet Union which remains the first proletarian breach in the capitalist walls; an antagonism which although temporarily pushed into the background on the part of Britain and the USA, will inevitably take first place as war gives place to civil war and imperialist peace in Europe.

History repeats itself on a higher plane. The same basic contradictions which impelled the imperialists to clash in 1914, forced them to attempt a solution by force of arms once again in 1939. The immediate cause of the present war was the rivalry between the old established and wealthy colonial empires, Britain and France who stood for the status quo, and the belated imperialist plunderers who sought to disrupt the status quo, Germany and Italy. This in turn precipitated Japan to challenge America and Britain for control of the East. The primary aim of German imperialism in 1914-1918 was to subjugate Europe as a base against Great Britain. Her primary aim in the present clash was to subjugate Europe, to challenge the United States for the domination of the whole world.

Reflecting the more concentrated and explosive character of the imperialist crisis, prolonged only by the treachery and the reformist illusions of the leaders of the mass organisations of the working class, the political contradictions are likewise on a higher plane. The experience of a generation has not passed without a corresponding rise in the level of political consciousness of the working class. The war of 1914-1918 resulted in mass chauvinism among the proletariat and peasants of all the capitalist countries. The new war was greeted with sullen resignation upon the part of the already disillusioned masses.

In all countries the world crisis is reflected in the universal militarisation of the people. Millions of proletarians and peasants, the most virile, productive and revolutionary sections of the population, are withdrawn from the factories and

from the land to shoulder arms. Just as the class struggle deepens and hardens in the factories and fields, so in the coming period it will reflect itself in the military forces. Imperialist war will give place to proletarian militarism. The revolutionary socialists, guardians of the class independence of the working class, alone understand this transition and base themselves upon it; they alone teach and organise their forces to replace the capitalist armies with the armies of the working class.

On the military fronts, the war is characterised by an entire shift in the balance of power and political initiative. The early victories of Hitler's armies are now swept into the album of history. The Mikado can see in this denouement, a reflection of the future of Japan. The mighty armies of Anglo-American imperialism, backed by the most gigantic war production in all history, stamp their hall-mark on the shape of things to come.

Germany defeated France, stripped and ruined her and her satellites on the European continent. Britain was left only the choice of becoming a satellite of Hitler or of American imperialism. She became completely dependent on the patronage of America. The further development of the war led to the ruin of all Europe; to the position where Germany and Soviet Russia have bled each other white. Large tracts of Asia have been laid waste. Alone of all the belligerents American imperialism can hope to come out of the war strengthened militarily and economically. But even mighty America cannot escape the consequences of the war. It will be impossible for her to enjoy in tranquillity the fruits of victory. The war will usher in such social eruptions and disturbances that not a single power will emerge victorious. In this war there will be no victors.

From Italy, the virus of the revolution has already spread to the Balkan countries. In Portugal the first stages of mass opposition to the Salazar regime has commenced. Franco feels the mighty tremors as the ground shakes beneath his feet. In Denmark the Nazis have been forced to apply the iron fist to suppress the movement of opposition. Germany, the bulwark of the European reaction, will inevitably and rapidly be engulfed in the all-consuming flames of proletarian

revolution.

The apathy and demoralisation the scepticism which had permeated the whole of the labour movement and undermined the confidence of the workers in their own class, is giving place to a new upsurge of revolutionary enthusiasm. A favourable conjuncture in the objective situation is opening up before the workers and the revolutionary movement. The coming days will be accompanied by rapid turns and tremendous revolutionary shocks.

Only the blind can fail to see the favourable revolutionary perspectives that lie immediately ahead. Only the sceptics and the corrupt can fail to be optimistic for the socialist future in face of the titanic class battles which are on the order of the day.

Long before the collapse of Italy, the outline of the European revolution could be seen in Yugoslavia and Poland where elements of dual power already exist in the guerrilla movement and the initial stages of the struggle for national liberation.

The revolution in Germany will unfurl with terrific force once it commences. The Nazis have toyed with anti-capitalist and “socialist” demagoguery even more than did their fascist counterparts in Italy. Even the majority of the German middle class will seek the socialist alternative to the regime. The powerful German working class, the strongest numerically and the most cultured of the European proletariat, has yet to say the last word. Nazi Germany became the hub of European reaction; a revolutionary Germany will become the citadel of the world proletariat.

## **Soviet Union rests on world revolution**

Out of the last war the workers of Russia achieved the first successful proletarian revolution under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. The land was expropriated from the landowners without compensation and the basic industries of the country confiscated and operated in the interest of the nation. The wealth of the ruling class was nationalised and concentrated in the hands of the workers' state.

In opposition to all the capitalist states, therefore, the defence of the nationalised wealth is a progressive task and must be supported by the masses of all nations.

But the failure of the revolution to sovietise industrial Western Europe; the effects of a weak and backward economy together with the exhaustion of the Soviet masses and the decline of the revolutionary enthusiasm, created the basis for the growth of a tremendous bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. In the same way as Bevin and Citrine personify and represent the bureaucratic caucus who control and batten upon the trade union movement, so Stalin and the Russian bureaucracy batten on the Soviet people. For the same reasons as the workers will defend their trade unions, if necessary, by military means against capitalist attack, so the working class will defend the Soviet Union. But the defence of the Soviet Union, no more than the defence of the trade unions, coincides with the policy of the bureaucracy.

By his policy of bureaucratic control in Russia, his reactionary Bonapartist national policy of conducting the war; his major concessions to world imperialism; his manipulations of the puppet "communist" parties abroad – Stalin is striking savage blows at the socialist revolution and undermining the existence of the Soviet Union. A correct revolutionary policy on the part of the Soviet leadership could ensure a speedy conclusion of the war through the socialist revolution in Europe. Together with a united states of Europe, the Soviet Union would be impregnable against imperialist attack and counterrevolution. But Stalin has long forsaken the road of socialist struggle for the path of counter-revolution.

By the dissolution of the Comintern, Stalin formally ends the last remaining links that bound the Soviet bureaucracy, even nominally, to the socialist revolution in Europe and the world. He has passed over openly to the position of agency of world imperialism within the borders of the Soviet Union. By this act, he demonstrates that he is prepared to aid the imperialists in destroying the revolution in Europe, which the bureaucracy regards with mortal terror. Symbolic of the position of the Stalinist bureaucracy, is the fact that the Comintern has been dissolved on the very eve of the Italian revolution.

The inevitable insurrection of the German working class will have profound repercussions not only on the European and British workers, but on the Russian masses. The relationship of forces can change overnight. The nightmare rule of the bureaucracy can be overthrown just as rapidly as the disappearance of Mussolini in Italy – with this difference: the revolutions in capitalist Europe will be social revolutions; they will commence on the basis and background of reformist politics and traditions and will seek to end the capitalist system. But the revolution in Russia will be a political revolution; it will commence on the basis of nationalised property, of the first workers' state with all the revolutionary international socialist traditions of Bolshevism. The Russian prisons are filled with thousands of Bolsheviks who went through the experience of the Russian revolution and who are grounded in the revolutionary ideas of Lenin and Trotsky, the ideas of world proletarian revolution. These will play their part in reconstructing the proletarian leadership of the Russian masses and introducing Soviet democracy on a higher scale.

The fate of the Soviet Union rests directly on the fate of the new wave of revolutions. Further defeats and a new epoch of reaction would inevitably usher in the bourgeois counter-revolution in Russia. It is on this perspective that the capitalists of Britain and America place their hopes and their calculations. The objective role of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and the world is to prepare and facilitate the work of the counter-revolution.

Fortunately, the bourgeoisie together with Stalin, is miscalculating. The epoch of

reaction is drawing to a close; the masses are preparing to pass to the counter offensive.

## **The future of Europe**

The open and unconcealed programme of American and British imperialism is to maintain an army of millions in Europe to hold the revolution in check. They openly proclaim that they seek to establish “democratic” capitalist regimes upon which to base their rule. But no more than the Nazis will they be able to hold Europe down, except by means of brutal and ruthless terror against the peoples. Their programme is one thing: to organise the forces to put it into effect is another. With the downfall of Hitler the majority of the British worker soldiers – and in spite of their political backwardness even the American soldiers – will have no stomach to play the role of SS in Europe. The revolutionary movements of the German and European workers will have profound effects upon the troops of occupation.

Whatever illusions wide sections of the European workers might have in the sponsors of the “free governments” – these will be shattered as the American and British armies march across the continent. “Free Europe” will be free only insofar as it conforms to the dictates of American finance capital. The gigantic stocks of food which are being accumulated on the American continent are not being held for the purpose of feeding revolutionary masses who will seek to end capitalism in Europe. They are being held to feed the armies of the counter-revolution just as Hoover fed the armies of intervention against the Soviet Union and the Hungarian Soviet Republic at the conclusion of the last war.

The failure of the revolution would mean a disastrous fall in the standard of life and culture of Germany and Europe. The German and European economy are interdependent. Without German industry and a German market, even the present conditions in Europe cannot be maintained. That is the contradiction

facing the Allies.

A victory for British and American imperialism, therefore, cannot herald a new blossoming of bourgeois democracy on the continent of Europe. On the contrary, without a breaking down of the national barriers and the expropriation of the means of production, a new era of barbarism and decay would set in on the continent of Europe. But even in that event there cannot be any stable reactionary regime in Europe today, with sufficient social support to effectively crush the revolutionary movement. The mass basis of reaction is vanishing. At worst, the capitalists will impose a bureaucratic military regime, which would be short lived. Without social support, it would topple and collapse at the slightest social shock, and a new upsurge would again commence.

In the absence of experienced Trotskyist parties with roots and traditions among the masses, the first stages of the revolutionary struggles in Europe will most likely result in a period of Kerenskyism or popular frontism. This is already presaged by the initial struggles of the Italian workers and the repeated betrayals of social democracy and Stalinism. But it is no reason for pessimism on the part of the fourth internationalists. The revolution will act like a hot-house for the fresh, confident cadres of the Fourth International. Those who swam against the stream and maintained their principles in a period of reaction, will be capable of building a mass party in the favourable conditions opening up. For the Trotskyist programme alone can lead to a break from quisling politics, end the crisis in Europe and lead mankind out of the capitalist impasse.

Against the capitalist programme of policing and “educating” the European populations, Workers’ International League propagates the fraternisation of the armies of intervention with the oppressed and revolutionary peoples.

Against the plans for protecting capitalist property rights in Europe, the task of the British socialists will be to assist the European populations to take over the land and the factories and overthrow the quisling capitalists and landlords.

Not for the replacement of an SS dominated Europe by an Anglo-American occupation of Germany and Europe, but for the united socialist states of Europe.

The struggle for national liberation, not only against their Nazi oppressors of today but their “democratic” oppressors of tomorrow will be a means with which to bind the revolutionary masses together. But the struggle for national liberation will be used for reactionary ends if it remains under the control of the capitalists and petit-bourgeoisie.

To the European working class and to our European co-thinkers, it is necessary to state clearly and unambiguously: the struggle for national liberation of the peoples of the occupied countries of Europe today and in the coming period will be successful only if it is conceived as part of and subordinate to the strategy of the struggle for the united socialist states of Europe.

## **India, China and the war in the Far East**

At one stage of the war it appeared that the first revolutionary explosions to upset the calculations of the imperialist powers would commence in India and spread throughout the Far East. 400 million Indian slaves of British imperialism sought the opportunity to free themselves from the yoke of a foreign oppressor who denied them the most elementary national and social rights.

But the senile, corrupt and cowardly bourgeois and petit bourgeois leadership of the Indian movement for liberation, fearing the results of a mass revolutionary struggle on the part of the workers and peasants, emasculated the movement and capitulated to the brutal military rule of the British oppressor.



The treachery of the Stalinist and the so-called socialist leaders in India, together with the numerical weakness and isolation of the Indian Trotskyists from the masses, gave the Indian bourgeoisie the possibility of consummating this betrayal. But the coming revolutionary struggles in Europe will once again open the flood gates of the mighty Indian revolution. In this period the Party of the Fourth International, the Bolshevik-Leninists of India, will alone give leadership to the Indian revolution.

In the struggle of the Indian people to free themselves from the British yoke, the British working class must give aid and support to the revolutionary Indian people. Counterposing the class programme to the petit bourgeois nationalism of the so-called lefts, the Trotskyists will explain to the Indian masses, and particularly to the Indian workers, that only under the leadership of the working class at the head of the peasantry, will victory be achieved. For only thus will it be possible to take the necessary social measures of expropriating the land and freeing the peasants from the landlords and moneylenders, to gather the control of the nation's resources into the hands of the working class and organise a democratic regime; only thus will they expel the British imperialists from India, gain genuine allies among the workers and soldiers of Britain, and achieve national emancipation.

In India our British comrades will oppose the policy of oppression and fraternise with the revolutionary people, aiding them by all means to achieve their national liberation and calling upon the worker-soldiers to assist the achievement of the democratic aspirations of a mighty oppressed people.

In Britain our task remains: to explain the real situation in India and expose the reactionary actions of the British imperialists in India; to oppose the oppressive policy of the ruling class, and to expose the role of the Stalinist and Labour leaders who act as agents of the ruling class in the ranks of the workers and who actively assist the imperialists in keeping the Indian people in continued subjugation by supporting the Churchill government. The British Trotskyists will

strive to rally the British working class behind the struggle of the oppressed Indian people for national liberation.

In the Far East, the spread of the war will bring revolutions in its wake. Already the war in China has imposed the severest burdens upon the Japanese masses. Whatever temporary enthusiasm has been aroused among the masses of Japan by the early victories against the Allies, will vanish as the burdens of the war press heavier upon the already impoverished population.

The regime in Japan rested basically not upon popular support, but upon the strength of the military caste. The coming blows of Yankee imperialism will crumble the archaic and dictatorial regime. As in Italy, so in Japan, the proletariat will have the final say. The Son of God will be forced to flee and seek an earthly haven.

Meanwhile, the heroic struggle of the Chinese people for national liberation has been merged into the general inter-imperialist war for domination of the Pacific. Whereas the alliance of China with the Allied imperialists may at a later stage lead to the complete subservience of China to American imperialism, at this stage, such alliance does not alter the basic and fundamental character of China's war for national liberation. The British workers must support and aid the Chinese people in this struggle.

But in China, as in India, the Chinese Trotskyists while fighting in the army of national liberation, explain to the Chinese workers and peasants that only under the banner of the working class will it be possible to break up the landed estates and unite the nation in a real democracy. Only under the leadership of the working class will the people be freed from foreign domination and the economic and cultural level of the masses raised by the establishment of the united Chinese socialist soviet republic.

## **Britain – the key to the European socialist revolution**

From the verge of defeat, the British bourgeoisie now looks forward to the prospect of victory over the Axis. But this victory cannot alter the perspective of decay and disintegration which faces British imperialism. The improved position is illusory. It has not come about due to the strength of British capitalism or to a recovery in her position in the main, but due to the resistance of the Soviet masses on the one hand, and the mighty economic and military preparations of American imperialism on the other.

The basic conclusions of the 1942 conference document Preparing for power remain as an estimation of the decline of British imperialism and the tasks of the British Bolshevik-Leninists. British capitalism is threatened from all sides. Her decline is concealed somewhat by the huge shipments of food and munitions under the Lend-Lease Agreement with American capitalism[41]. But once this huge subsidy is withdrawn, as it will be, the position of the British bourgeoisie will become serious. It is on this international background that political life has developed in Britain.

The British empire is maintained by the gracious consent of Wall Street. But revolution, beginning in Europe or Asia will rock the empire to its foundations. Even complete military victory for Allied imperialism will not solve the problems which face senile British capitalism. American imperialism has ruthlessly stripped the British capitalists of their foreign investments and grabbed strategic, economic and political positions within the British dominions and colonies. In Europe the American bourgeoisie are manoeuvring for position even there to oust Britain from the lion's share.

Despite the military victories, there has been a further growth of radicalisation and discontent among the masses. This radicalisation has embraced wide strata of the population never before affected. The middle class has turned its face

towards the left. The growth of Common Wealth from the middle class is an indication of this movement. The young generation – always the barometer for measuring the mood of the masses – is moving steadily not only in the direction of labour politics, but even towards a “communist” solution. This is a reflection of the yearning for change and the dissatisfaction with the old system, which cannot assure the masses peace and cultural freedom, which dominates political thought today.

### **Epoch of reforms at an end**

The Gallup poll of June 1943 has revealed concretely the development of mass consciousness which the Marxists had predicted. The fact that Labour has a majority of the voting population behind it even today is of enormous significance in indicating the shift of mass opinion. If that is so today when the first minor clashes between the classes have taken place, it is a portent of the events in the next epoch. An important section, a proportion higher than ever recorded in an election in Britain, have become thoroughly disillusioned with reformism and moved over to “communism”. The bulk of these come from the young and most active section of the working class. Another large section of the youth is apathetic and cynical of all politics because of disgust with the Labour leadership and the repellent face of “communism” in its caricature, Stalinism. These will be thrust into active political life at the first serious shock in Britain. The middle classes are already restlessly turning towards left politics as an answer to their systematic impoverishment at the hands of monopoly capitalism.

In the last epoch the strivings of the masses were diverted into the channels of reformism. The Labour bureaucrats, basing themselves on the crumbs they received from the table of imperialism through the exploitation of the colonial slaves, retained a stranglehold upon the working class. But the decay of British imperialism in the last quarter century has completely undermined the basis of reformism. It is no longer possible for the British ruling class to continue their exploitation of the greater part of the world. With this, the period of concessions to the British workers is at an end; and so too, is the basis of reformism

undermined. Even in its bloom, reformism did not gain for the workers any major concessions. The last 25 years' experience of reformism, its defeats and betrayals, has left an imprint on the consciousness of the British proletariat. Two Labour governments, the betrayal of the general strike, the present coalition – all have been a means of imbuing the proletariat with a scepticism towards the Labour bureaucracy.

There exists a political maturity among the British workers, hitherto unknown. The influx into the trade unions, the support for Labour, which indeed has a majority behind it today, does not signify a vote of confidence in the Labour, and trade union leaders. Never in history have the basic masses of Labour had less confidence in the leadership than at the present time. They support and will continue to support the Labour bureaucracy, for lack of an alternative. Only the passivity of the proletariat constitutes the strength of reformism today. When events sweep the masses into action and the reformists are put to the test, a rapid reorientation will take place. The material and psychological basis has been prepared by the history of the previous decades.

The consciousness of the bourgeoisie that they are losing their grip upon the masses, leads them to project such schemes as the Beveridge report, as the means of deluding the people into continued support for capitalism. But such schemes – meagre and illusory as they are – are completely unrealisable. Both at home and abroad, the post-war plans of British imperialism are utopian. Their plans to use the British workers and soldiers against the revolution in Europe, in India and Asia, as well as in Britain will be met with unexpected results for them.

In the years preceding the war, as a consequence of the lull in the class struggle, the labour bureaucracy became enmeshed in the state machine and separated from the mass of the working class. Under the impact of the war the masses are moving rapidly towards the left; the bureaucracy is moving rapidly towards the right. Today the Labour bureaucrats do not reflect the feelings and desires of the rank and file Labour worker, or even the unorganised worker. Under the stress of

tomorrow's storms they will once again swing left – at least in words – not to lead the struggles of the workers against their employers, of course, but so that they can more effectively betray these struggles. We must not be taken unawares by such movements of the Labour lefts, but must prepare for such events in advance, forewarning the workers, calling upon the “left” Labour demagogues to match their words in deeds and thus consciously prepare the workers for the inevitable betrayal which will be carried out by the labour lackeys of the bourgeoisie.

The British workers favour ending the coalition with the capitalist class. But against the will of the masses the labour bureaucracy clings to the coat tails of the bourgeoisie. Without their support, the capitalists could not maintain their control. While the masses are distrustful of their leaders, they have not yet broken decisively from reformism. This dictates as the main strategical agitational slogan of the fourth internationalists in Britain: “End the truce! Labour to power!” By this we facilitate and reassert the independence of labour from capital. The coming to power of a Labour government would be the means of giving an impetus to the revolutionisation of the masses. A majority Labour government would be in an entirely different position to the previous Labour governments, insofar as even before it has come to power, the masses are critical. Whether the Labour leaders are forced to break, or whether they resist, the slogan serves as a means of exposing them and educating the workers. In any event, the coalition cannot be maintained for long, for inevitably the pressure of the masses will break it in the coming period. In this situation the fourth internationalists stand prepared with the transitional programme, including the demand for Labour to power.

## **ILP – revolutionary words – reformist deeds**

Precisely when the proletariat is moving towards revolution, the leadership of the ILP chooses this moment to take a step in the direction of reformism. They are describing a similar evolution on a new historical background to that of the ILP in 1920-1923, when on the revolutionary wave which followed the last war,

they moved away from reformism to a position of applying for affiliation to the then revolutionary Communist International. But unable to accept the revolutionary conditions of the international, the ILP swung back to the bosom of the Labour Party as a reformist body. Now, even before the eve of revolutionary upheavals, the ILP is preparing once again to return to the bosom of reformism. But here too, while the leadership is moving right, the rank and file are moving left.

Once the coalition is broken, the ILP will no doubt move into the Labour Party. This is the most likely perspective in the coming days and is in line with the policy and traditions of the ILP and Labour leaders. The Labour leadership will need a left face to turn towards the masses, and this face will be provided by the ILP leaders.

From the viewpoint of revolutionary socialism the entry of the ILP into the Labour Party would constitute a progressive step. It will hasten the differentiation within the ILP on the one hand, and facilitate the emergence of a mass left within the Labour Party, on the other. The leadership will swing even more openly to the right, making themselves indistinguishable from the pseudo-lefts in the Labour Party. The worker members in the ILP will begin to understand what is meant by the Bolshevik characterisation of this party as a centrist party. But this process of clarification will depend largely upon the growth and development of a revolutionary wing within the ILP.

Within the Labour Party, the ILP would act as the gathering point for all the left elements. This would facilitate the education of these elements as well. The leftward moving workers would find in the ILP merely a transitional phase of their development. One thing centrism cannot face up to: that is mass action. For this is what exposes its inadequacies, its vacillations, its refusal to face up to events on the revolutionary programme of Marxism.

## **The future of Stalinism**

Over the past two years Stalinism has revealed its reactionary character to the most advanced elements within the working class. An unparalleled opportunity opened out for them to capture a major section, if not the majority of the working class. Instead, they lost ground within the ranks of militant labour, particularly in their strongholds, the Clyde and South Wales. Nevertheless, they remain a serious factor in the situation, with a growing support among the working class, as the campaign for affiliation to the Labour Party demonstrated.

The more backward and fresh strata of the workers moving in the direction of communism, are entering the ranks of the Communist Party because of the victories of the Red Army against the Nazis and its association with the Soviet Union and the October revolution. Although the CP appeals to the vilest and most jingoistic sentiments of the backward sections of the working class, some of the best elements within the party (with misgivings perhaps) still support Stalinism in the fervid hope that the policy will change. Moreover, it is only those sections of the workers who have directly experienced the cynical strike-breaking role of the Stalinists, who have received a powerful inoculation against them. As skilled deceivers of the masses, far more subtle and clever than the trade union bureaucrats, they have learned to clothe their policy of betrayal in high-sounding and even revolutionary-sounding phrases.

A big section of the petit bourgeoisie has been attracted towards Stalinism. With the prevailing mood of radicalisation coupled with the weakness of the revolutionary forces, Stalinism is still likely to gain a mass basis in the first stages of the coming revolutionary wave. Such a support could only be of a temporary character. It would last until such time as the masses realised their error in identifying Stalinism with Bolshevism.

Under the impact of events, new splits and fissures are opening out within the



ranks of the CP. The membership is not homogeneous and anchored by tradition to Stalinism. By changing the party from a tightly knit organisation to a loose broad current, the bureaucracy has thereby lost its control over the future development of the membership, despite the totalitarian regime and the despotic control over the apparatus. Their new members are almost as much raw material for politics as were the youthful members of the Labour Party in the past.

But the right wing policy of the “Communist” Party, today, may be followed by a policy of ultra left adventures tomorrow. For the policy of the British Stalinist party is not determined by the needs of international socialism, or by the needs of the British working class, but by the needs of the reactionary Moscow bureaucracy. A clash between the bureaucracy and British imperialism on the field of diplomacy would probably be accompanied by ultra left gestures by the puppets at King Street. But even in this event the CPGB is incapable of carrying out the tasks of a revolutionary socialist, or communist party, and can only lead the workers into ill-prepared adventures and capitulations.[42]

To combat the lies of the Stalinist leadership and to patiently explain the theoretical, historical and political basis of Stalinism and of Trotskyism is a primary task in educating the best members of the CP and in winning them over to Bolshevism.

## **The road for industrial workers**

The reawakening and stirring within the ranks of the workers which is taking place, finds its best reflection among the workers in industry and the armed forces. More than 8 million workers are organised in the trade unions at the present time. This surpasses the peak figure of the revolutionary wave of 1920. Women are joining the unions in greater numbers than at any time in history. The wave of strikes last year, which spread from the mines to shipbuilding and transport and affected other industries, is an indication of the process.

The factories and the unions provide the centres of struggle for the working class. It is here that the struggle assumes a direct form. The betrayal and sabotage by the union leadership of the attempts of the workers to secure wage increases to cope with the rising cost of living; the burdens of income tax, the sacrifices of the workers while the capitalists reap greater profits; the palpable fraud of “equality of sacrifice”; the shameful pensions allowances; the inequalities and iniquities of the distribution of food; the chaos and incompetence of the capitalists in industry which demands added strain and effort on the part of the workers: all these factors have aggravated the discontent of the workers and prepared the background for the coming crisis.

The frustration by the trade union bureaucrats of the efforts of the workers to stem the attacks on their standards [and] their refusal to protect the workshop representatives from victimisation has forced the workers to find some immediate alternative form of organisation to meet the assaults of the employers and the fetters of the bureaucracy. Through the shop stewards’ organisations they attempt to defend themselves in the factories. But their own experiences and the development of the struggle itself impels the workers to the realisation that the forces of one factory are not strong enough to face the combined attacks of the employers, the trade union bureaucrats, the Stalinists. Instinctively, the advanced workers begin to look for a broader form of organisation which would unite the workers in different parts of the country for common defence.

The National Council of Shop Stewards led by the Stalinists partially fulfilled this need in the past. With the transformation of this body into an auxiliary strike-breaking instrument of the CP, it has virtually collapsed. But the new current of militancy which is emerging among the workers, seeks for some organised outlet. The expression of this mood has been provided by the establishment of the Militant Workers’ Federation, initiated naturally enough, by militants in the traditional storm centre of the Clyde.

For the third time in history the workers seek to build an industrial leadership

which will defend their interests. But the crisis in Britain will almost immediately pose before such an organisation major political tasks, which if met, will transform it into an instrument of the socialist revolution. A correct policy on the part of our party towards this organisation will win the best militants who will help form the mass basis for the Trotskyist party of socialist revolution.

## **The decline of Conservatism**

Marx had predicted the disappearance of the Conservative Party and a struggle for power between the Liberals and the revolution. The development in the coming period indicates the beginning of the process visualised by Marx, but in a different form. Liberalism has been eliminated as a political factor in Britain. The position that will rapidly develop will be one of a struggle between the extreme reaction and the revolution. The Conservative Party which has maintained itself intact for more than a century, has definitely passed its apogee. With the undermining of the basis of reformism in the loss of Britain's world hegemony, simultaneously the basis of Conservatism is destroyed.

In itself, the Conservative Party is the product of the same conditions which produced labour reformism: the industrial, military and political supremacy of the globe by British capitalism. The transformation of Britain's position from that of world mastery to a second rate power, implies not only the undermining of the basis of Labour reformism, but the destruction of the props on which the Tory party itself is based. From being the strong, unified and stable representative of British capital, fissures are already apparent in the Tory Party with the appearance of several well defined factions. Further developments can only promote the disintegration and decay of this former bulwark of British capitalism. Already the first signs appear. The die-hard wing of the Tories will pass rapidly over to the side of extreme reaction, and even the British form of fascism. Meanwhile, the hold that the Tories had over large sections of the workers for generations has been loosened and will be entirely broken.

Britain is faced with a new period of Chartism, on an entirely different historical level. The wave of revolution will change and transform the relations between the classes.

Owing to the favourable synchronisation of all the historical factors, exceptional possibilities exist for the victory of the British revolution. Without exaggeration it can be stated that Britain is the key not only to the European but to the world situation.

### **The future is ours**

The crisis of the revolution is the crisis of leadership. Long in advance the old outlived organisations have demonstrated their bankruptcy in a series of catastrophic defeats of the proletariat throughout the world. The wave of reaction engendered by the pernicious policies of Stalinism and Social Democracy, led to the isolation of the young and weak forces striving to uphold the banner of Bolshevism; the Fourth International were forced to swim against the stream.

It was not possible to convince even the vanguard of the working class of the correctness of the viewpoint of Trotskyism, except through the experience of the most terrible defeats. But these defeats in their turn produced a wave of reaction within the ranks of the working class. Not only within the ranks of the bankrupt Second and Third Internationals, but even in the ranks of the isolated and weak forces of the Fourth International were the effects of this reaction inevitably reflected.

The putrid decay of the Second and Third Internationals is expressed in that fact that they learned nothing from the terrible defeats caused by their politics, and in the hour of mortal danger for the workers, perfidiously rallied to the side of world imperialism. But with the new revolutionary wave which will sweep the

globe, all tendencies and all trends within the working class will undergo a new and decisive test. The bankruptcy of the old organisations will be clearly revealed in the flames of the revolution. The Fourth International will become the decisive revolutionary force on the planet.

In the revolutions in the past decades the one factor missing to ensure revolutionary success was a trained Bolshevik party and Bolshevik leadership. On the basis of the new upsurge the possibility exists for the creation and training of a Bolshevik Party – above all in Britain, in the coming epoch.

Properly speaking, the work of the Fourth International from 1928 to 1938 consisted in theoretical clarification and the selection of the cadres. It consisted mainly in theoretical preparation. The war and its repercussions presage the beginning of a new epoch for the Fourth International. The history of our tendency has begun. And in Britain its cadres have an exceptional opportunity. The handicaps which our continental co-thinkers suffered do not exist. With a correct policy and a correct orientation Workers' International League will play a great role in coming events. In advance tens of thousands of the flower of the working class have their eyes open to the treacherous role of Stalinism and reformism. By our work and our devotion they will find the road to the revolutionary party. Our small vanguard can and must become the nucleus of the steeled and hardened Bolshevik party. Revolutionary theory, policy and action, fused with revolutionary audacity and revolutionary optimism – armed with these we will build the party and lead the workers to the conquest of power.

# **WIL conference resolution on international affiliation**

**July 1943**

1. Workers' International League declares its first and only allegiance to the Fourth International, it unconditionally adheres to the programme and basic principles of the Fourth International; accepts the authority of the International and bases itself upon and educates its cadres in the spirit of democratic centralism.

2. WIL accepts the general principle that all the adherents of the programme and principles of the Fourth International should be united in one organisation and that there should be one section of the Fourth International in each country with full official status.

3. WIL agrees with the International Secretariat that the Trotskyists in Britain should be united into one organisation but believes: that such a unification must be based not only upon agreement in words with the fundamental programme and principles of the Fourth International, but also upon the main perspectives and political and tactical tasks of the Trotskyists in Britain; that the policy of the united organisation must be based upon a majority agreement, granting the minority the normal rights within a Bolshevik organisation.

4. The WIL believes that a pre-revolutionary situation is maturing in Britain: that the political clarification of Trotskyist policy and an agreement in practice is the precondition for unification; furthermore, the WIL believes that fresh forces are needed to eradicate the stale and sterile faction struggles and sectarian strife which belong properly speaking to the pre-history of Trotskyism, and that

toleration of sectarian policies in the present period are crimes against the Fourth International and the international working class.

5. The WIL believes that it would be criminal to repeat the disastrous blunders of our French comrades, who, in the revolutionary period in France 1934-1938 turned nearly the whole of their attention inwards instead of outwards to the masses propagating the policies of the Fourth International, organising and training fresh cadres; the result was that at the end of the revolutionary period Trotskyism was almost as weak as at the beginning.

6. Basing ourselves upon the above stated ideas, and as the result of our direct experience in Britain, the WIL frankly states that it has no enthusiasm for turning the whole attention of the organisation inwards to solve the split and is not convinced that it is necessary to do so, nevertheless in response to requests from the IS to solve the anomaly in Britain, WIL has opened up discussions with the RSL for the purpose of unification and has explored every avenue to end the split and fuse the genuine Trotskyists together; WIL declares that despite the refusals and evasions of the RSL it will continue to seek a unification on the basis of a majority decision on the political, tactical and organisational tasks in Britain; an agreement to be arrived at at a joint conference guaranteeing minority rights.

7. The WIL declares that for the purpose of the unification discussions, it is prepared to recognise the RSL with its expelled factions as a single organisation; it is prepared also to recognise the existing factions as separate organisations, to fuse separately or collectively; that real steps can be taken to unify our movement of the so-called "Trotskyist Opposition" with the WIL, since the former body declared for the Trotskyist policy of the WIL twelve months ago, before it was expelled from the RSL.

8. In view of the protracted discussions that have already taken place within each group on the political and tactical questions which separate us, the WIL believes that together with, and in agreement with the IS, a six months discussion period

be opened up, at the end of which period unification be effected, on the basis of one policy and one tactic, at a fusion conference by a majority vote.

9. Meanwhile, to end the ambiguity and aid the unification discussions, and in line with the universally accepted and established facts: that WIL is in political agreement on the most important questions with the IS, whereas the RSL is in opposition; that WIL is the recognised Trotskyist organisation by the bourgeoisie, labour fakers and Stalinists, the ILP, the advanced workers in Britain, and is a recognised Trotskyist organisation by the American party and by other sections of the international; in view of this, the international is faced with the historic obligation to clearly and precisely establish the status of WIL. The WIL asks that either it be recognised as an official section of the Fourth International on an equal status as the RSL and its expelled factions (which in our opinion would be the best solution) or as a sympathetic section of the Fourth International with full rights of discussion, etc., but without a vote; a decision on either of these lines would not conflict with the statutes of the Fourth International, with the statement in paragraph 2 of this resolution, or with the principles of democratic centralism; the precedent for both contingencies has already been established in the Communist International under Lenin.

10. We appeal to the International Secretariat that a speedy and favourable solution to the status of WIL be arrived at, and that the proposals of WIL as stated in paragraph 3 be the accepted basis for unification of the Trotskyist forces in Britain.



# **Fusion conference of WIL and RSL**

Held on the 11th and 12th of March, 1944

## **Introduction**

This conference was held in order to bring about fusion between the main Trotskyist groupings in Britain today. These Trotskyist groups were as follows:

The Left Fraction of the Revolutionary Socialist League (led by Robinson of Glasgow)

The Trotskyist Opposition of the Revolutionary Socialist League (led by Lawrence)

The Militant Group (led by D.D.H. Harber)

The Revolutionary Socialist League (the bulk of the membership led by Cooper)

The Workers' International League.

The Fourth International was founded in September 1938 and sections were set up in each country. The RSL was officially recognised as the British section of the FI. The WIL, on the other hand, was never a section of the FI although it carried out its programme and supported its policy, because it disagreed with the question of the tactics put forward by the FI in relation to the British situation. The RSL, because of its various fractions, was never [as] effective as the WIL and throughout the years since 1938, the International Secretariat of the FI have

been attempting to bring the WIL into the FI. Various “unity” discussions have been held from time to time but have never succeeded.

In September of 1943, the International Secretariat of the FI passed a resolution at its conference, urging the fusion of the Trotskyist organisations in Britain as soon as possible in view of the importance of Britain in the military and political situation. Accordingly letters were exchanged and a representative of the FI – Terence Phelan – arrived in this country in the autumn of 1943 with the specific task of urging the fusion of the groupings and giving all the guidance and assistance possible.

In January, 1944, the RSL groupings held a conference at which the various groupings agreed on fusion. Negotiations began between representatives of the RSL and representatives of the WIL at whose meetings Phelan was always present.

Each section and grouping prepared its own resolutions for the conference and each section was allowed to speak on its own resolution. It will be seen, however, that the WIL resolutions were carried, thus indicating that the balance of forces between the RSL groupings and the WIL is very much in favour of the WIL.

Given here is the agenda of the conference: details of the resolutions passed and some brief notes on some of the discussion on military policy.

The fused organisation is now to be known as the Revolutionary Communist Party and is now [the] officially recognised British section of the Fourth International.

## Agenda

Standing orders report

Fusion resolution

Military policy

Entrist tactic

Workers' control.

Industrial policy.

WIL political and industrial pamphlet - adoption of

Resolution on name.

The Left section of the RSL moved a resolution on standing orders relating to the question of the vote for members overseas:

“That this conference recognises that members of the Fourth International overseas have been arbitrarily deprived of their rights of membership. Whilst recognising that this is a gross abuse of power by the Joint Negotiating Committee it urges those members not to exercise those rights to have the proceedings invalidated since such would mean that the efforts and expense of this conference would be wasted. This conference calls upon the IS (International Secretariat) to fulfil its promise to ‘protect’ loyal minorities by suspending from membership of the Fourth International those guilty of arbitrary and bureaucratic actions.”

This resolution was moved by Robinson of Glasgow who stated that there were

three reasons why he urged the adoption of the resolution.

That [a] number of members in the Forces had written to him protesting against the fact that they had no vote.

That it was necessary to decide on the question of sabotage in the occupied countries and those fighting the USSR.

That it was necessary to discuss the Italian situation.

## **Discussion**

Croft (Glasgow RSL) read [a] letter from [a] soldier in Italy who had put the Italian section of Trotskyists in touch with the FI.

Ward (WIL in RAF) spoke against the resolution stating that it was necessary to understand the character of the work in the armed forces – that the work had to be done in such a way which would not allow the officers to attack them. Being caught participating in the voting in the WIL would mean court-martial.

Another person in the forces, speaking against, said that it was necessary to rely on [the] leadership in period of illegality.

Barclay (Militant Group) spoke against by saying that the resolution was a manoeuvre of Robinson's to gain votes for himself and that the letters from soldiers was a put-up job.

Lawrence (Trotskyist Opposition) supported the resolution on Italy as the International had not stated its policy on this question.

Grant (WIL) spoke against by saying that although it would be a good thing for the forces' [comrades] to have the vote, nevertheless this was impossible and to have votes by post would be a travesty of democratic centralism. It was necessary to have trust in the leadership.

Betty Russell (WIL) supported the resolution saying that the activity of the comrades in Italy justified their having the vote.

Robinson at this stage reported that it was obvious that the comrades in the forces were not being given any chance and that Grant had already decided that they should be deprived of their voting rights.

Haston (WIL) replied that the Left fraction was only putting up this amendment in order to upset the conference – that the Left have hostility to all other fractions and had even advised members not to attend the conference – a kind of Left “vendetta”.

The question of the Italian situation and the question of sabotage in those countries fighting the USSR were not extensively discussed and the actual copies of the resolutions are not available in detail. All these resolutions moved by Robinson were defeated and Haston (WIL) stated that he was not in favour of supporting sabotage in those countries fighting the USSR.

### **Fusion resolution (moved by WIL)**

For the past ten years, whilst in fundamental agreement on the principles and programme of the Fourth International, the British Trotskyists have been split on the question of tactics. These splits took place during a period of great defeats for the international working class and consequent reaction within the workers' organisations and were mainly a product of the isolation of the British Trotskyist movement.

But this period is now at an end. The war has led to the beginning of a new stage of the class struggle and in the development of the international labour force and movement. Once again the workers are gathering their forces for great class battles. Trotskyism, as a tendency, is beginning to merge with the rising tide of militancy and socialist aspirations of the working class.

In Britain this new upsurge has resulted in favourable conditions for the growth and development of the Trotskyist movement. To utilise these favourable conditions to the full, the forces of the Fourth International must be unified into one organisation, under a single and united leadership, and with a firm and resolute policy based upon the principles, programme and statutes of the Fourth International and reinforced by majority decisions on the political and tactical question which separate the comrades.

Together with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International the members of the two existing Trotskyist organisations have decided to end the splits in the British movement and to unite all fourth internationalists under one banner. At this conference the assembled delegates of the hitherto separate organisations – the Revolutionary Socialist League and the Workers' International League – declare the fusion of these two organisations into one single party.

The past clashes on the political questions engendered deep cleavages between

the leading personnel and embittered relations between the members of the organisations. An important task for the leadership of the new organisation is to introduce a real comradeship into the political discussions and life of the party, and to weep away all vestiges of the bitter disputes of the past in the interest of the fusion, this conference therefore dissolves all past organisational conflicts and disputes and closes the discussion on these questions in the British section.

The unification of the British Trotskyists is a great step forward for our national and international movement and will be heartily welcomed and endorsed by members of the Fourth International the world over.

The members of the British Section of the Fourth International appeal to all isolated comrades who stand on the platform of the Fourth International to join its ranks and take their place in deciding the outcome of the great historic battles which open out before the working class.

The unification of the fourth internationalists takes place in the period of the dissolution of the Third International, and when the open degeneration of its national sections into agencies of the ruling class is shattering the unity of the Stalinist ranks. In ever increasing numbers these militants are finding their way into the ranks of the Fourth International.

In uniting our forces at this Fusion Conference, the assembled delegates appeal to all who genuinely seek to achieve the international socialist emancipation of the working class, to join us and fight under the banner of the Fourth International.

Socialist workers! Communist workers! The Fourth International is the world party of Socialist revolution. It is the only international socialist or communist party of the working class. On its banner is inscribed the slogan of the First

International: “Workers of the World Unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains. You have the world to gain.”

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This resolution was moved by Haston (WIL). He stated that the position of the Trotskyist movement had been affected by the splits which had helped to isolate the movement from the working class. The question of organisational differences was not of fundamental importance to the tasks of the party. A more comradely atmosphere was needed. Disputes as far as the movement was concerned must go and should disputes take place the hard won fusion would be disrupted. An amendment moved that the discussion of 1938 should be reopened for its educational value but this amendment really intended to make the WIL admit they were sinners in 1938 and ask forgiveness of the Fourth International. This is a false attitude to the conference for the WIL had continued to raise this question with the IS over a period of years and indicated the attitude they would take at a fusion conference. The IS had not replied. The IS had, however, now stated that all discussion on 1938 should be closed. The continued discussion on this matter in the past was responsible for the disgraceful position in the past. Representation to the highest authority could always be made if the persons were not satisfied.

Hilda Pratt (WIL) disagreed with certain parts of the resolution stating that she did not consider that it was a question of being ashamed of the splits and the struggles but all this was part of the growth or the movement in the building of a revolutionary party. Mistakes are an important process as the history of the Bolshevik party shows. For the sake of unity the question should be closed now but should be raised in the future in the course of work in order that all might get clarification.

Someone from the Left fraction, here protested that a national party such as the RSL could not fuse with an international party such as the WIL and he was



therefore against fusion.

Harber (Militant group) stated that in his opinion it was fatal to reopen old wounds and sores – that the same people who played a disruptive role in 1938 were playing the same role today. Comrade Pratt was the leader in 1938 and had been expelled – she attempts to provide a platform for personal ends in the organisation.

Atkinson (WIL) stated that comrade Pratt's point of view was that as the WIL had a majority, the RSL could be slung out afterwards.

Healy (WIL) supporting the amendment stated that the matter should be closed for six months but that the differences in points of view should not be excluded from the movement. He asked what Haston and Harber were afraid of if the matter should be raised again in six months.

Haston (WIL) replied to the discussion by stating that 1938 was important for the historians. A united party must abide by the decisions of the majority. To accept the position that the WIL were wrong before fusion took place would have meant that fusion would never have been agreed to by the WIL. It was up to the international to raise the question for educational reasons. The united front and the Healy and Trotskyist Opposition resolutions separates those who want to build the party or disrupt the movement. The amendment was lost by 11 to 54 votes.

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**Greetings from the Fourth International**

These were given by Terence Phelan, the American representative of the International Secretariat, on behalf of the Socialist Workers' Party. He said that the essential factor in fusion was the working out of tactics within the organisation. He hoped that there would be a genuine dispersal of the factions and no smearing over of political differences.

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### **Resolution on the military policy (submitted by WIL) [43]**

The Second World War into which capitalism had plunged mankind in the course of a generation, and which has been raging for more than four years is the inevitable outcome of the crisis of capitalist methods of production long predicted by the revolutionary Marxists and is a sign of the impasse out of which capitalism cannot lead the mass of humanity.

The war of the British ruling class is not an ideological war fought in the interests of democracy against fascism. This has been demonstrated clearly by their support of Hitler against the German working class, their acquiescence to the seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia; by their cynical policy of non-intervention in Spain which enabled Franco to massacre hundreds of thousands of Spanish anti-fascist proletarians; by their support of Darlan in North Africa and Badoglio and Victor Emmanuel in Italy. The British ruling class is waging the war to maintain its colonial plunder, its sources of raw materials and cheap labour, its spheres of influence and markets, and to extend wherever possible its domination over wider territories. It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to patiently explain the imperialistic policy of the ruling class and expose its false and lying slogans of the "War against Fascism" and the "War for Democracy."

The victory of German fascism and Japanese militarism would be a disaster for the working class of the world and for the colonial peoples. But no less disastrous would be a victory for Anglo-American imperialism. Such a victory would perpetuate and intensify the imperialist contradictions which gave rise to fascism and the present world war and will inevitably lead to new fascist and reactionary regimes and a third world war.

The British working class, therefore, cannot support the war conducted by the ruling class without at the same time opposing its own class interests on a national and international scale. Our party is opposed to the war and calls upon the working class to oppose it. Only by overthrowing the capitalist state and taking power into its own hands under the leadership of the Fourth International, can the British working class wage a truly revolutionary war and aid the German working class and the European working class to destroy fascism and capitalist reaction.

By their support of the war the trade unions, the Labour Party and Communist Party, with their satellite organisations, have betrayed the historic interests of the working class and the interests of the colonial masses oppressed by British imperialism. It is the duty of revolutionary socialists to mercilessly expose the leadership of the organisations as agents of the ruling class in the ranks of the workers and to win over the broad mass of the workers from the leadership of these organisations to the party of the Fourth International.

The outbreak of war created a new objective situation in which the revolutionaries had to conduct their political activity. Millions of workers – men and women – the most youthful and virile section of the population are conscripted into the armed forces. The war not only changed the way in which millions of workers are forced to live but also their level of political consciousness. War and militarism has penetrated every phase of and become the basis of their lives.

It would be a mistake on the part of revolutionary socialists to lump the defencist feeling of the broad mass of the workers together with the chauvinism of the Labour and Stalinist leadership. This defencism of the masses stems largely from entirely progressive motives of preserving their own class organisations and democratic rights from destruction at the hands of fascism and from a foreign invader. The mass chauvinistic enthusiasm of the last war is entirely absent in the present period. Only a deep-seated suspicion of the aims and slogans of the ruling class is evident. To separate the workers from the capitalists and their lackeys is the principal task of the revolutionary party.

The policy of our party must be based upon the objective conditions in which we live including the level of consciousness of the masses, and must help the masses in the process of their daily struggles along the road to the seizure of power.

In the present period all great social changes will be made by military means. Our party takes the capitalist militarisation of the millions not merely as the basis for the restatement of our fundamental principles and aims but for the purpose of propagating positive political ideas and policies in the ranks of the working class as an alternative to the class programme of the bourgeoisie. This necessitates the supplementing of our transitional programme with a policy adapted to the needs of the working class in a period of militarisation and war. Our attitude towards war is based not merely on the rejection of the defence of the capitalist fatherland but on the conquest of power by the working class and the defence of the proletarian fatherland. From this conception flows the proletarian military policy of the Fourth International.

In the last war socialist pacifism and conscientious objection were progressive and even revolutionary in opposition to the policy of national unity and support for capitalist militarism which was advocated by the chauvinists. But thirty years of class struggle have clearly and decisively demonstrated that such policies act as a brake on the socialist revolution and serve only to separate the conscious revolutionaries from the mass of the working class caught up in the military machine. To this negative policy must be counterposed a positive policy which

separates the workers from their exploiters in the military organisations.

The working class and the revolutionary socialists are compelled to participate in the military organisations controlled by the capitalist state. But to the capitalist militarism for capitalist ends, the revolutionary socialists must counterpose the necessity of proletarian militarism for proletarian ends. Our military policy defends the rights and interests of the working class against its class enemy; at every point we place our class programme against the class programme of the bourgeoisie.

The Labour Party, the Communist Party, the ILP and the sectarians have also policies for the workers in arms. But these policies are reformist based upon the perspective of the continued control of the state in the hands of the bourgeoisie. These policies contain only a series of minor democratic and financial reforms which do not lead to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the conquest of power by the working class.

Our party is for the arming of the working class under the control of workers' organisations, the trade unions, workers' committees and political parties. We are against the special schools controlled by the capitalists for the training of their sons and agents for the highest posts of command and technicians of the military arts.

We are for state-financed schools, controlled by the trade unions and workers' organisations for the purpose of training worker officers, who will know how to defend the interests of the working class.

We are against the selection of officers in the armed forces, including the Home Guard, by the bourgeois and its state machine. This selection takes place on the basis of class loyalty to the capitalists and hatred of the working class. We are

for the election of officers in the armed forces by the men in the ranks.

These are positive steps which our party advocates in its proletarian military policy and which supplements our general transitional programme in the struggle for power. Such a policy, not only caters for the needs of the workers in uniform in their day to day struggle against the reactionary officer caste, but by its thoroughly anti-pacifist character prepares the working class for the inevitable military attacks at home, and for the defence of the proletarian fatherland against reactionary war of intervention.

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## **Discussion**

Grant (WIL) moved this resolution: he stated that the problem of military policy was one on which no party could fail to have a correct policy. [A] revolutionary party must have a policy which faces up to the working class and the worker-soldier in arms. [The] overwhelming mass of [the] working class threatened by being crushed by German imperialism or British or American imperialism. It was necessary to finish with the old view of mere opposition to the war. Show that the aims and interests of the workers cannot be saved by having officers of a different class. Necessary to appeal for the election of officers by the soldiers. It was impossible to trust officers of bourgeoisie who have sympathy with the fascists. In Egypt English officers fraternised with captured Italian officers. English officers were shot by British soldiers at Dunkirk. German imperialism was not wanted here any more than British or American imperialism but the working class was the only force which can really fight fascism. Arm the workers! In the Home Guard, bosses and managers command. Officers should be elected. Arms stolen and hidden away even in the Home Guard of Britain where leakage of arms for revolutionary period. The chauvinism of the Bolshevik party was there before the return of Lenin. Under no conditions can the workers

support imperialism in an imperialist war. The treachery of 2nd and 3rd internationals was responsible for this bloody war but saying this would not convince the workers.

Trotsky's transitional programme says that every working class problem is of power. Only the workers can wage a revolutionary war. The masses of the workers were dragged into this war and faced with the choice of Hitler or Churchill. They chose Churchill. Our party must give the working class a fighting alternative. The Welsh working class were bitter against the Stalinist and traitors like Horner. Take control of things! And there will be an immediate response from the workers. This question means life or death to the movement. Conquest by military means won't defeat fascism. The only reason the German workers support Hitler is the same reason why the British working class support Churchill. We stand in the position of the Fourth International.

The resolution was seconded by another member of the WIL. He said that it was necessary to go into the war desiring to defeat the bourgeoisie. Workers would take military machine created by the imperialists for the overthrow of the imperialist regime. Only anti-fascist war possible after the workers have seized power. Revolutionary defeatism was position of Lenin in 1916 on eve of revolution. The policy does not differ in essentials today.

Davis (Militant group): There was a deep difference in the movement regarding the war, stated this member speaking against resolution. The slogan of "the enemy is at home" did not sink home against the tide of working class illusion. As war progressed and invasion appeared imminent, what should have been attitude of revolutionary party. Not the arming of workers to fight Germans. To defeat the boss class should have intensified class struggle and explained to the workers the imperialist character of war. Neither the WIL, the RSL or America had any clear Military Policy. The WIL had not changed its policy since 1940. A revolutionary situation will come before end of war. The critical attitude to the government did not affect the mood of the masses at the time of imminent invasion. Every strike is a political strike even though supporting the war. At this

point the revolutionary mood begins. Put to the workers day to day problems as insoluble while supporting the war. In this way workers can be won from the war. Fascism is not imported – in no place where Germans have occupied is fascism introduced. Fascism is here. Churchill, Attlee, etc. Defeat of British imperialism facilitates overthrow of imperialism. We are against war – against the defencist. Not to resist invasion until Germans have achieved power.

This statement was seconded by Harber (Militant group) who stated that the position was same as the policy adopted by Lenin in the last war – only new feature is the fear of fascism compared with the fear of Tsarist Russia.

Mercer (Left fraction): Any revolutionary struggle or strike facilitates the defeat of imperialists. It was necessary to decide either to fight your own bourgeoisie or a foreign power. To ask working class to fight a revolutionary struggle in order to forget the war is ludicrous. Popular or unpopular you must work to facilitate the defeat of your own imperialism. WIL and Co. will not face this question. The question is chauvinism or a revolutionary attitude to the war. Fraternisation with the working class of the enemy is directed against the British bourgeoisie because they are sick or the war, pressure of the American working class in the Socialist Workers' Party must have been hellish. Leadership should have been able to stand against that pressure. More excuse for Kautsky than Cannon.

This statement was seconded by someone who said the sole enemy of the British working class was British imperialism. We protested against the idea of fraternisation as a weapon against German imperialism, instead of against British imperialism. Any working class action facilitates the military defeat of one's own country. The Socialist Workers' Party seems to hold a contrary opinion. One cannot get revolution whilst one is imbued with patriotism.

Goodman (Militant group) said that there was no difference between Grant's slogan from the position of Harry Pollitt. Our job is to explain to the workers that this is not an anti-fascist war.



Some member of the WIL here attacked those members of the Left fraction by stating that the Left relegated the revolution to some distant future when the world revolution and conquest of power now opening up. There was a need for a positive policy. The Left were the real defencists in favour of the German bourgeoisie.

Another member of the WIL pointed out that there was a dread of fascism among the working class. Bourgeois democracy was the same as fascism and the same as international capitalism.

Lawrence (RSL) stated that a revolutionary situation facilitates defeat and defeat produces a revolutionary situation.

Someone in the armed forces, a member of the WIL, stated that there was a need to build class conscious groups and cadres in the army as nucleus of future Red Army to defend and achieve revolution.

Healy (WIL) said that the workers must take power by smashing the capitalist machine.

The discussion was ended by the last contribution being made by Bose an Indian member of the Militant Workers' Federation who said that it was immediately necessary to prepare a programme for power. The resolution submitted by the WIL on military policy was carried.

One should note here that the military policy of the Left Fraction and the

Militant group is for the complete defeat of the British imperialist powers. Cannon, in America and the WIL, want to go partly with the workers in the fight against fascism.

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### **Resolution on the entrism tactic (Submitted by WIL)**

The conference holds that: Whereas the acceptance of the principles and programme of the Fourth International are sufficient to establish the revolutionary basis of our tendency this is not sufficient to win the leadership of the working class and that for this purpose it is necessary to correctly apply the international programme to the national conditions and operate the correct tactics that flow therefrom.

Whereas the Trotskyist forces are numerically weak, with little contact and support among the masses, it follows that the penetration of the mass by our organisation and the winning of the masses to the banner of the Fourth International requires a clear grasp of the perspectives of the period and the operation of skilful political and organisation tactics flowing from these perspectives.

Whereas a serious revolutionary party must learn from the experience of the workers of the world, it must also be able to utilise these experiences as in relation to the actual conditions in which revolutionary work has to be conducted.

Whereas the entry of the revolutionary cadres into the mass organisations of the

working class is one of tactics and not of principle, it follows that to raise the tactic of entry as a question of principle is extreme sectarianism whether it comes from the entrists or anti-entrists and must therefore be combatted as harmful to the revolutionary party.

Whereas the Labour Party is the mass political party of the British working class it follows that a correct attitude to the Labour Party – as to the trade unions – provides the key to the tactics of any organisation claiming to be a revolutionary in Great Britain.

Whereas it is considered in our perspective that although the workers and lower middle class elements are not turning in masses towards the Labour Party in the present period, but on the contrary are turning away from it in large numbers and joining other working class organisations and even the middle class Commonwealth, nevertheless, in general, the masses will again turn to the Labour Party in the coming days of class struggle and the Labour Party will again become a mass active organisation of the working class.

Conference holds, however, that this perspective must be concretised so that the best results from the orientation and deployment of our forces can be gained for the Fourth International.

Whereas the Communist Party is rapidly gaining the numbers and growing into a mass political party of the working class whilst hundreds of its best political revolutionary members are leaving it and seeking a new revolutionary party, it follows that an organisational split in the mass movement is inevitable unless the Communist Party is liquidated into the Labour Party and that, in any event, its best militants who have in general passed through the school of Labourism, will not easily be influenced by the “socialist left” in the Labour Party but can and must be won directly to the open banner of the Fourth International.

Whereas the past perspective of our tendency was for the complete collapse of the centrist party – the ILP, in fact, the ILP has grown in numerical strength and influence among the workers and is attracting fresh support from growing sections of the left labour and socialist conscious workers and therefore offers an important field for faction work on the part of the Fourth International.

Whereas the ILP will most likely apply for affiliation to the Labour Party and be accepted when the Labour Party breaks the coalition and achieves its independence, it follows that the ILP will become the main left wing organisational base for the leftward moving labour workers and that the “socialist left” and similar paper organisations set up by the Trotskyist entrists will play no part in the Labour Party during the period of mass swing, but on the contrary will be a hindrance to our penetration of the Labour Party and must therefore be abandoned in favour of our factional entry into an affiliated ILP.

Whereas the perspective of a mass left swing to the LP may at a later stage necessitate a total entry of our forces into the LP, such a perspective is most unlikely, but if this situation arises our forces will probably enter the LP through the affiliated ILP.

Whereas the perspectives must be continuously before our organisation and our tactics must be constantly reviewed in the light of experience and in line with the development of the real movement of the workers at the present stage of the class struggle in Britain the LP is almost dead and is losing the confidence of the workers, as witness the support of the Scottish Nationalist candidate against the LP candidate in Kirkcaldy, and therefore is not a major field for our political faction work at the present time.

Whereas the main field of revolutionary activity at the present period lies on the industrial front, the factories, shop stewards movements and trade unions and will continue so in the immediate future, it follows therefore that our party must turn to the industrial movement of the working class which we can influence by

our ideas and by our participation and that the main axis of our activities demands the raising of an independent banner of the Fourth International and the recruitment of the revolutionary industrial militants, many of whom have already passed through the Labour and Communist parties and the ILP directly into the British section of the Fourth international.

Whereas wide sections of the workers are critical of labour reformism and are turning to communism in its perverted Stalinist form, thousands of women and youth are skipping the labour stage and are seeking a militant revolutionary communist lead, it follows that the strata which is the most exploited section of the working class form virgin soil for revolutionary propaganda and thousands can be won directly into the party on the basis of our militant directives and our unstained banner.

Whereas the existing political organisation of the working class are all fields of guerilla faction work on the part of the British section of the Fourth International, the LP is the least favourable field for the present and immediate period ahead and that the ILP is the most fruitful. Our forces must be directed therefore on the basis of this appraisal.

Whereas conference therefore resolves: that the main task and the main tactic of our party in the immediate period is to build the independent revolutionary party of the British working class; to directly raise our banner before the British workers; to direct the maximum energy for the achievement of this task and to subordinate all factional work in the existing political organisations of the working class to that end.

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**Resolution on industrial policy (Submitted by WIL)**

The favourable turn for British imperialism in the field of military struggle is accompanied by the beginning of a crisis in the field of arms production. The influx of American ammunition has resulted in contraction in certain aspects of the British arms industry. In some of the large munition plants a slackening up of production is already taking place. The transfer of workers from one branch of production to another is accompanied with widespread redundancy. The ability of the capitalists to make profits out of the war is hampered and they are no longer able easily to grant concessions, being forced to clamp down more definitely on the wages and conditions of the workers.

The first serious attempt to tighten up on wages was indicated in the National Arbitration Award No. 326 for engineering workers. Behind the legalistic phraseology of the terms of this twice interpreted Award, the gains from which affected only a small section of the workers (those working in establishments paying the “bare” minimum) and which for the vast majority of the workers meant no increase at all, can be seen as an attempt to fix a “ceiling” on wages.

The increasing radicalisation of the organised workers is particularly underlined by the recent turn of the postal workers’ and the civil servants’ unions and their struggle for affiliation to the TUC: the challenge to the state which is contained in their recent actions. With the mass conscription, the working class has been united on an unprecedented scale. The women and youth, inexorably drawn into the struggle side by side with the men, become an important factor in the struggle. In particular the women are fast losing the psychology of domestic drudgery, and are rapidly developing the characteristics of class conscious workers. The number of organised workers has reached its highest peak having exceeded the year 1920, which was 8,000,000 in the unions.

Faced with attacks on wage standards and the intensified exploitation through piece-work conditions; the added burden of income tax; the failure of joint production committees to solve the problems of production except at the expense of the workers; the use of the reactionary essential Works Order and the

victimisation of trade union militants – a sharp discontent and radicalisation is transforming the outlook of the British working class.

This discontent has already manifested itself in sporadic and ever increasing disputes throughout the length and breadth of the country. Following the Betteshanger strike in Kent at the beginning of 1941, a series of strikes swept over the coal fields. These were followed by small strikes on the part of the dockers, of railwaymen, and of engineers. These later struggles, however, took place in relatively backward and unorganised areas. A contradiction existed in the fact that despite the deep feeling of dissatisfaction among the workers in areas such as the Clyde and South Wales, the workers in these parts had not yet participated in any major industrial disputes.

The Stalinists who had entrenched themselves among the militant workers in these areas, used their stranglehold on the traditional centres of working class militancy to push their anti-working class policy and strike breaking policy and put the brake on the working class struggle. Nevertheless the Communist Party, which has become the most vicious strike breaking force in British working class politics, cannot quell the rising tide of militancy among the working class. Nor, with the continuation of its present policy, will it be able to place itself at the head of any mass movement to divert it into harmless channels. It is already apparent that the hold of the Stalinists over the advanced workers is loosening.

The local nature of the early disputes resulted in the almost complete isolation of the strikers. But the third year of war, 1942, witnessed the workers participating in more strikes than in any single year since the General Strike of 1926. By far the most important dispute of that year had taken place on the Tyneside, which though traditionally a backward area, was the scene of a strike involving more than 20,000 ship-building workers. This strike marked the end of a year in which the engineering workers participated in almost half the total number of disputes whereas previously the miners had borne the brunt of the struggle.

Despite the fact that more labour days were lost in several years of the “peace” from 1926-1932 than in 1942 the increased number of disputes and the manner in which the workers are tending to spread the struggle serves to remind the employers of the eruptions they will have to face in the coming days.

In 1943 the transport workers, especially in the Midlands area, joined with their brothers in the coal-mining and engineering industry in showing fight against the employers, but it is now possible to perceive not only a broadening out but a general transformation in the nature of the struggle. Whereas previously the workers who were involved in disputes were isolated, the nationwide support given to the Neptune Engine Works on the Tyne; the solidarity of the miners in the South Yorkshire and South Wales coalfields over recent disputes affecting single collieries in the given area; or the strike of 23,000 Nottinghamshire miners over the imprisonment of one lad, these are demonstrations that the workers are closing their ranks in solidarity. But the latter strike in particular is an indication of the political character that the struggle is assuming.

Already the workers are realising the necessity of linking up with and gaining support of workers in other parts. The committees that were established as the directing centres in all these disputes are not yet soviets, but they point to the manner in which the workers, through the efforts of their local leaders, will create fighting committees or soviets on a regional and national scale in the future. More significant however is the fact that instead of the struggles being confined to the more backward areas as in the past, the recent disputes among the miners and engineers in South Wales and the Clyde, point to the fact that the more advanced workers are on the move. All these factors demonstrate that the main strategy of the revolutionary socialists in the field of industry must be to raise consciously in the minds of the workers the necessity to end the industrial truce.

The effects of the industrial truce with the government and the employers, which place the trade union movement in the clutches of the state machine and gives employers a free hand, are becoming obvious to the broad mass of the working



class. Under the control of the present administration, the trade unions are rapidly becoming appendages of the capitalist state, with large numbers of trade union functionaries (starting with Bevin) in official government positions, as labour officers, etc.

The foregoing is clear indication that all the objective and even the subjective conditions for tremendous explosions are maturing in the factories, mines and transport of Britain.

Arising out of the struggles that have already taken place, the question of leadership is being raised more and more sharply in the minds of the working class. The workers have learned, whenever they have been forced to stand and fight, that the Labour and trade union leadership, together with the Communist Party and the National Council of Shop Stewards, have deserted them, and indeed, sabotaged their struggle at every turn.

But whilst the servile attitude of the trade union bureaucracy [towards] Churchill and the capitalist class and their sell-out of trade union rights has aroused the anger of the rank and file, only a small section is expressing its disgust by a conscious struggle for the removal of the leadership. Generally the workers in the trade unions are apathetic, the branches being poorly attended. This is assisted in no small degree by the Stalinists, who more skilful at putting forward their strike-breaking policy, are acting as props of the bureaucrats. Nevertheless, this apathetic mood is a temporary one and will be overcome by the workers on the morrow. The attitude of the AEU members on the recent wage award which forced the bureaucrats to make hasty pious gestures to the rank and file, is an indication of what the leadership will have to face as the struggle develops. Our duty is to assist these workers, the vast majority of whom are hostile to the strike breaking policy of the leadership, by providing them with the consciousness that will take them forward in the struggle. The bureaucratisation of the trade unions and their class integration with sections of the ruling class dictates the strategy of fighting to democratise the unions and replace the top strata with fresh elements; it dictates the need for an active policy of regular election of officials every two

years at most, as well as the need to pay the union officials no more than the average wages for the trade or industry.

The Barrow strike was remarkable for the magnificent co-ordination of legal and “illegal” activity; co-ordination between the local legal machinery of the unions, as evidenced in the AEU – the branches and district committee and the “illegal” activity which gave the “victor punch” to the Barrow workers’ struggle.

The experience of the Barrow strike destroys completely the theory of ultra left sectarians who wish to turn their backs on the mass industrial organisations of the working class (the unions) and concentrate the whole energy of industrial militants on the building of ad hoc and factory organisations. This experience underlines the need to carry the fighting spirit of the factory organisations into the branches; in the district committees; and into the topmost organs of the trade union. It emphasises the tremendous strength of the workers’ organisations.

The struggle in the workshops cannot be separated from the struggle in the unions, but inevitably it takes on a faster tempo and consequently assumes a more direct form. The actions of the bureaucrats in sabotaging the attempt of the working class to defend themselves from the attacks of the capitalists, force the workers in the direction of seeking an alternative leadership. Once again they are setting up committees more directly representative of the rank and file, and while it is not possible to foresee the exact form the movement will take, some indication can be obtained by the recently formed Glasgow committee which adopted the historic name of the Clyde workers’ committee. Initiated by militants in that area, directly representative of the workers in their factories, this committee adopted a fighting attitude and programme which included as the central point, the struggle for the independence of the trade union movement from the capitalist state machine.

More important, however, is the fact that these militants recognising the need to link up with other militants, not only locally, but nationally, established a

national federation of trade union militants now known as the “Militant Workers’ Federation”.

This Federation is not a paper organisation characteristic of Stalinism from 1925 to 1935, but already has a certain backing among influential workers’ committees and genuinely reflects the tendency now developing in Britain. Whatever the form of struggle in the various industries (the possible establishment of “consultative” committees in single factories or groups of factories) this national Federation has every possibility of becoming the focal point around which the workers will organise, when the coming storm which will inevitably witness the most terrific industrial clashes in the history of British capitalism, breaks out. The Militant Workers’ Federation may not receive a mass response immediately but it is already attracting the cream of the industrial militants who are aware of the false policies and corruption of the trade union leadership and of the Stalinists. Even if the stormy days of industrial strife engulf this Federation before it has had the possibility to harden its national connections, there is no doubt that it will play an important role in the future national struggle of the industrial workers.

The trade union leaders and Stalinists in particular are aware of this. That is the reason for Bevin’s recent outburst and his threat of new repressive legislation. It was a reflection not so much of the fear of the ruling class as of the mis-leaders of the working class in the field of industry. But whilst repressive measures both through the state machine and by expulsions in the unions may temporarily halt the forward march of the Militant Workers’ Federation, history demands this form of organisation. Repression can succeed only in consolidating the working class and establishing the role of the trade union fakers in the eyes of the organised workers.

The decision of the industrial militants to establish the Federation on a broad basis to include all industries is fundamentally correct. In the present stage of development of monopoly capitalism and the closely knit character of British industry, when all the major problems that confront the workers in the

engineering trade, also confront those workers in other industries. When the miners, transport workers, railwaymen, are all crying out for a clear lead, the sectional policy advocated by the ILP of confining the organisation to the engineering industry would doom it to a fate of an unofficial movement at the end of the First World War. Moreover in the final analysis, the correctness of broadening out the basis of the committee will be demonstrated with the inevitable transformation of the industrial struggle into the challenge for power. To assist in this process, by waging a struggle against any ultra-left, syndicalist or sectarian tendencies, is the duty of the revolutionary socialists.

The struggles of the engineers towards the end of the last war saw the transformation of Card Stewards who merely acted as collectors and reporters for their respective unions, into a fighting shop stewards' movement, organised on a factory basis irrespective of trade union, in order to carry on the struggle abandoned by the union leaders. Nevertheless, after the glorious struggles on the Clyde and elsewhere, seeing in the movement a threat to their positions, the union leadership were able, through the lack of a conscious leadership on the part of the shop stewards' movement, to absorb the movement within the legal framework of the unions. This was followed with the exception of 1926 and 1931 by a period of almost 20 years of relative stability for British capitalism, which witnessed a slow day to day process of struggle on the part of the rank and file in a second attempt to build up an alternative leadership to the trade union bureaucracy.

This period was a favourable one for British capitalism in its attacks upon militant workers. It saw many of the finest types of militant workers crushed through isolation, victimisation and subsequent unemployment, becoming disillusioned and dropping out of the movement. When the National Shop Stewards' Council was formed in 1936, the most advanced elements of the working class gathered around it in the belief that at last they had found a solution to their strivings for a fighting alternative leadership.

The hold this body gained over the industrial workers has been utilised since the

political turn of the Communist Party in 1941, to put forward an anti-working class strike breaking policy. It now serves merely to implement the policy of the union leaders in the factory committees. The significance of this situation is that for the first time, the trade union bureaucrats have large numbers of direct agents in the factory committees, and where the CP is the strongest, the result is demoralisation and despair among the workers. But even this cannot last for ever.

Towards the end of World War 1, despite the low level of consciousness and despite the lack of conscious leadership, the workers were striving in the direction of a political solution to their problems. Since that period, however, the workers have experienced two decades of sell-outs on the part of the Labour bureaucracy and the Stalinists. Consequently, we have the contradiction where today the workers are far in advance of the predecessors in the last war, with a higher level of political consciousness, but are tending to express their militancy on the industrial field with a distrust of all the established political tendencies of the working class. The effect has been the revival of a semi-syndicalist trend among the industrial militants.

But the integration of the trade union bureaucracy with the state machine and the complete control of the state over Labour through the medium of the Essential Work Order, and other legislation, creates the objective conditions whereby any militant industrial movement must inevitably come into conflict with the state machine.

At such a stage, the whole struggle which is at present centred mainly on the wages question, will be raised to a political plane. The struggle against the strike-breaking policy of the trade union bureaucracy and their new-found appendages, the CP, will coincide with the struggle for the ending of the industrial and political truce.

The organisation of the National Federation marks a turning point in the labour

and trade union movement; it is an earnest of the fact that for the third time, in an effort to release themselves from the stranglehold of the bureaucracy, the workers are attempting to create a movement with a national link-up.

For 25 years the Shop Steward and Factory Committee form of organisation has been steadily growing throughout the length and breadth of Britain. From a few advanced but isolated factories in World War 1, the factory committees have extended to almost every factory throughout the country in World War 2. Large and small, heavy and light industry, the factory and shop stewards' committees have been built and extended to all fields of production. In essence these committees are embryonic Soviets and reflection of dual power inside the factories.

Due to the strength of the capitalist class, the relative stability of their rule, and as a reflection of the low tempo of the revolutionary movement, these committees play an essentially defensive role at the present period. But with the turn in the situation the deepening of the crisis, and the sharpening of the class struggle, these committees will inevitably assume an aggressive character and seek a dominating position, challenging the capitalist class for the control of industry.

It is necessary consciously to extend these committees from one plant to another, from area to area, and establish a firm national tie. But our primary task in this field is to make the workers conscious of the real possibilities of these committees, not as offensive organisations of this or that group but as organs of control, as organs of power. The more deeply we entrench these ideas among the industrial workers, the easier the task in the future struggle, the surer the victory in the coming battle for proletarian power.

*These factors impose on the revolutionary movement all the more sharply the necessity of orientating itself towards the trade unions and industrial movement. Just as Britain is the key to the international situation so is industry the key to*

*our work in Britain. The success of our work in this direction will be the yardstick by which we measure the building of the party. As the movement finds expression in the industrial field, fresh elements will be pushed to the fore. Constituting the cream of the working class, unspoiled and uncorrupted, they will be among the best fighters in the front line of the struggle. This strata will provide the new cadres for Bolshevism and will become the recruiting ground for our party.*

In spite of numerical weakness of the forces of revolutionary socialism, our ideas are the most powerful yet forged by the working class movement. We can play a decisive part in the coming struggles by giving conscious expression to the movement of the workers. This has already been shown in practice. With a correct policy on the issues which face the working class, we can raise the struggle to higher level, simultaneously drawing the best workers to our ranks to build the party of the Fourth International in Britain. But we will only succeed in this task of building a mass party and challenging the capitalist class for power to the extent that we succeed in converting the mass industrial organs of the working class into instruments of the socialist revolution.

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(This resolution was that adopted at the WIL conference held in October 1943. It was reconsidered at the fusion conference in the same form.)

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[The] number present at the conference was approximately 160, of whom 60 were delegates and 20 were in the armed forces.

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It was decided that the name of the new organisation should be Revolutionary Communist Party. The latest edition of the Socialist Appeal has been published under this name.

## **Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party (British Section of the Fourth International)**

March 1944

### **Aim:**

The Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth international, bases itself upon the revolutionary principles embodied in the first four congresses of the Communist International and the world conferences of the Fourth international. It strives to win the leadership of the British working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' government (dictatorship of the proletariat) in Britain, and in close collaboration with the workers and toiling masses of all lands and under the leadership of the Fourth International, to proceed to the abolition of classes and the construction of the world socialist order of society.

### **Article 1. Name**



The Revolutionary Communist Party, British Section of the Fourth International,

## **Article 2. International affiliation**

The Revolutionary Communist Party accepts the programme and statutes, of the Fourth international, is an affiliated body of the Fourth international, and constitutes the British Section.

## **Article 3. Membership**

Any person who accepts the principles and Constitution of the Revolutionary Communist Party and who participates in its activities under the direction of the local, district and national bodies, is eligible for membership of the organisation.

Every member must be a member of a branch, but in exceptional cases where no branch exists within reasonable distance or for special reasons a member may be made a national member and operate under the direct control of the CC.

Application for membership must be made to a branch (except in cases as specified in (b) and if accepted must be ratified by the district committee or the central committee.

Applicants for membership accepted by the branch shall be made probationary members for three months, at the end of which period the application must be reviewed by the branch which will decide to admit the applicant to full membership, extend the period of probation, or exclude the probationary member – all subject to the ratification of the district committee or the central committee.

A probationary member may be expelled or admitted into full membership before the termination of the three months probation period, under the same

procedure.

Probationary members, are entitled to a voice on any question but may not vote and are not eligible to serve as delegates or officials of the organisation.

#### **Article 4. Branches**

The unit of the RCP is the “branch” which is based on an industrial or area group of not less than five. Where the branch is of sufficient size, it may be divided by the DC or CC or has the right to divide itself with the permission of the DC or CC.

Each branch should meet at least once weekly, [and] shall where necessary elect a branch committee at an annual general meeting of the branch or at specially convened meetings. Specially convened meetings must be called by the branch secretary at the request of not less than one third of the branch membership.

The branch shall elect officials who shall be responsible for the direction of local activity.

#### **Article 5. District committees**

District committees shall be set up in such districts as annual party congress or central committee decide. They shall be elected at annual general meeting or delegate conference of the branches (not less than three) within that district; or at special district meetings convened for this purpose by the central committee or at the request of one third of the district members.

District committees shall appoint all district officials and should meet at least once a month.

District committees are responsible for the direction of all party activities within the district.

District councils shall be set up consisting of the district committee plus delegates from the branches for the purpose of advising and maintaining contact between the district committee and the membership. They shall be convened by the district committee or at the request of one third of the district branches.

## **Article 6. National congress**

A national congress of the membership represented by delegates from each organisational unit branches, district committees, and central committee and such other units as may arise from time to time, shall be convened each year by the central committee. The national congress shall constitute the highest authority of the RCP.

Branches are entitled to send delegates to the national congress with a vote, on the basis of one delegate for every ten members or part of ten (or such figure as may be decided by the central committee in accordance with the party's growth).

District committees consisting of five or more branches are entitled to send a delegate to national congress in a consultative capacity, i.e., the delegate may speak but not vote.

Members of the central committee attend national congress in a consultative capacity. CC members may be elected as delegates from branches.

Members are eligible for election as delegates to congress after completing six months full membership.

Where branches exist, which have no members who have the necessary qualifications as delegates, or where branches desire to send a delegate who is without the necessary membership qualifications, they can be represented at congress by special application to the central committee which may grant vocal and/or voting rights.

Established groupings of three or four members may combine together with other groupings or branches in the same district for the purpose of representation at congress, or may send a delegate to congress with the consent of the central committee.

Draft resolutions and reports of the central committee must be submitted at least two months prior to national congress. Party organisations have the right to submit resolutions or amendments to the drafts submitted by the CC; final amendments can be submitted by delegates in the course of the congress deliberations.

The central committee shall appoint a standing orders committee and a credentials committee. The congress shall be ruled by the standing orders committee.

No binding or imperative mandate can be imposed on any delegate to national congress.

Decisions on all questions, including amendments to the constitution, are adopted by simple majority at the national congress.

## **Article 7. Central committee**

The national congress shall decide upon the number of, and elect, a central committee and alternates, and shall vest the central committee with full authority between national congresses.

The central committee should meet at least every three months. It shall appoint from among its members a political bureau, a general secretary, a political secretary, and an organisational secretary. The three secretaries shall together constitute the secretariat which should meet daily and be responsible for the routine work of the party. The secretariat shall function from the central party headquarters or such place as may be decided by the central committee.

The political bureau, the secretariat, or one third of the central committee

members have the right to convene meetings of the central committee at any time.

The political bureau shall have full authority between sessions of the central committee. It should meet once weekly or must be convened at the request of the secretariat.

### **Article 8. Control commission**

The national congress shall elect a control commission from non CC members whose function shall be:

To investigate any complaints or special enquiry which may be referred to it by the CC and, to advise the CC of the results of its investigations and enquiries.

To investigate complaints of individuals, branches and districts against disciplinary measures taken against them by higher party organisations, and to submit their opinion on these to the CC or national congress for final decision.

### **Article 9. National council**

A national council shall be set up consisting of the central committee plus a delegate from each district committee and should meet at least every four months.

The national council shall be an advisory body except as specified in article 10 and shall be responsible for maintaining contact between the national membership and the central committee.

## **Article 10. Special congresses**

Special congresses with the same notice as annual congress may be called at any time, and with such notice as may be decided by the central committee. The central committee must convene a special congress at the request of more than one third of the national council or one quarter of the branches.

## **Article 11. Special powers**

In the event of emergency, the central committee shall have the power to amend the constitution.

## **Article 12. Membership contribution**

Membership dues shall be a minimum of one shilling per week to be divided into three parts: 6d should be forwarded by the branch treasurer to the central committee on the first of each month; 4d shall be retained by the branch for its own funds; and 2d should be forwarded to the district committee on the first of each month. In addition, each member shall pay 2d per month for the international.

Members two months in arrears shall be considered in bad standing and not permitted to vote; members three months in arrears shall be considered lapsed after due notice from the branch treasurer.

The district committee and central committee have the right to modify the dues of any member after a special application has been made by the member

concerned through his branch.

Branches two months in arrears of dues shall be considered suspended by the central committee after due notice has been given.

Members in bad standing shall not be eligible for election as delegates to any party conference or committee.

Branches and district committees and the central committee have the right to impose levies on members.

Branches and district committees shall issue quarterly balance sheets of all finances.

The central committee shall issue a balance sheet of all finances to each national congress.

### **Article 13. Democratic rights and discipline**

All decisions of the governing bodies (national congress, central committee, political bureau, district committee and branch) are binding on all members and subordinate units. Any members or unit violating a decision of a governing body shall be subject to disciplinary action.

The majority decisions of any body are binding on all the members within its jurisdiction. While cooperating in carrying out the decisions of the majority, all minorities have the right to express dissenting opinions within the party, to circularise the membership with any material stating these opinions, and to appeal to higher bodies against any decision with which they disagree. The central committee shall maintain a theoretical or internal bulletin as a medium for expressing these dissenting opinions and shall publish material submitted for discussion within twenty-one days of receipt.

The national congress shall define the limits of any discussion.

Disciplinary action, including censure, reduction to probationary membership,

suspension of membership, and expulsion may be taken by the body having jurisdiction over any member committing a breach of discipline or acting in a manner detrimental to the interests of the party and the working class.

Charges against any member must be made in writing and the accused furnished with a copy; such charges are considered by the body in which the charge originates at a meeting at which the accused member can attend and if a member of that body vote; the findings of this meeting shall serve as a recommendation to the district committee which shall take a decision. Charges originating in the district committee, political bureau or central committee shall be decided upon by those bodies.

Any member subjected to disciplinary action is entitled to appeal to the next higher body up to the national congress; the disciplinary action in the meanwhile is upheld.

Any member has the right to appeal against a decision of the national congress to the governing bodies of the Fourth International, and the political bureau shall provide all facilities for such an appeal, and shall transmit any documents pertaining thereto.

All officials of the party and members of the committees shall be subject to recall by the section of the membership which appointed them.

No member may accept a paid permanent position in a working class organisation without receiving the permission of the political bureau. All members holding public office or positions in the working class movement, paid or otherwise, shall be under the complete jurisdiction of the party.

## **Article 14**

All members of the RCP are required to enter the mass organisations of the working class under the direction of the party organisation for the purpose of fulfilling the aims of the party.



# **Open letter to SWP members**

## **A reply to the report of comrade Stuart**

**By RCP Political Bureau**

January 1945

Dear comrades,

We address this letter to the leadership and members of the SWP – our brother party, on the contents of the International Bulletin issued by the SWP, with great reluctance and only after much hesitation. For this is not a spontaneous defensive reply to what we believe to be – and will try to prove to be – a slander upon our party and its leadership here in Britain: it is a considered attempt to place before the American comrades the truth about the British situation.

We would prefer to be stating a simple factual case of the present stage of the class struggle in this country and of the work of our party, together with a report of the pre-fusion discussions and the formation of the united party – the Revolutionary Communist Party. But our intervention in your discussions has primarily other, and in some respect, more important ends: the destruction of a fable and the exposure of a tendency which has made itself manifest on the part of certain leaders of the SWP in their activity in the British movement.

The fable is the one which has been reported by Stuart and disseminated by the SWP leadership in their International Bulletin. The tendency is factional, anti-internationalist in spirit and activity on the part of leading SWP members which acts as a blight on our movement; which distorts the facts and the relations within our parties; and which, unless destroyed completely in our movement (internationally and nationally), will do it irreparable damage.

Were we the most charitable people in the world, in dealing with this International Bulletin, we would be compelled to say that this is a classic example of how an international report should not be compiled or written – particularly if the purpose of such a report is to inform one section of our movement about another. But we do not propose to be charitable on this occasion. The issues are too big; the tower of stupid misinformation too high; the inevitable damage to international understanding and collaboration in the work of building the Fourth International too far reaching for this material to be freely peddled without complete refutation.

### **Correcting minor errors**

Minor factual errors abound in Stuart's "report" from the first page to the last. We propose to touch on some of these errors, but only in passing. Our main task will be to tear down the distortions and factional misrepresentations.

It is erroneous, for instance, to state that "a mass demand for Labour to break the coalition has swept the trade unions for the past two years". That stage has not been reached. It is fast coming but it certainly had not been reached when the report was written.

It is false to say that when Aneurin Bevan goes to the mining districts to conduct strike breaking "the miners wave him aside no less lustily than the Stalinist

Horner or the old time bureaucrat Lawther”. Bevan’s popularity is not an “old popularity” – it is new. Nor is it this illusory “discreditment among his constituents” that pushed Bevan into collision with the Labour Party heads. Bevan has never been so popular in the Ebbw Vale district, from which he was sent to Parliament, as he is in the present time. He is today’s popular idol in South Wales – and for that matter in Britain as a whole among the Labour masses. He is riding on the crest of the wave in the popular reawakening of the labour movement. It is this that brings him into collision with the Labour tops, and not at all because he wishes to regain lost credit.

Stuart writes:

“In the middle of March the Workers’ International League and the Revolutionary Socialist League held a joint convention at which these two organisations fused and took the name Revolutionary Communist Party.

“The groups had previously been divided by tactical differences. Originally, these differences centred around the question of entry into the Labour Party. Subsequently organisational differences superseded even the tactical. In 1938 a unification was attempted by the International on the basis of a compromise of the disputed questions, on which no clear majority had been evident. One group refused to accept this compromise and remained outside the formal framework of the then constituted British section of the Fourth International. This group later became the WIL. The official section became known as the RSL.”

The fusion conference convened by the International in 1938 was attended by four groups – the RSL, RSP, Militant Group and WIL – and not, as one would conclude from the above paragraph, by the RSL and WIL. The documents and discussions of this conference (which was dominated by American Party leaders) have unfortunately, never been published for the International.

The WIL was in existence prior to this conference and did not “later become the WIL”.

The original differences between the WIL and the Militant Group, from which the WIL arose, were of an organisational character. Later tactical and political differences arose, which maintained the separation. Thus, the facts are the reverse of those portrayed by Stuart.

It is incorrect to state that “a representative of each of the three former factions of the RSL are on the CC”. Nor is it correct to say that “no representation was given to the former WIL minority”. Conference representation was on a proportional basis. There are on the CC two members of the Militant Group, none for the Left – since they refused representation on the grounds that they would take no responsibility for the organisation or its policy. The TO and minority of WIL claimed to have the same political and tactical position as the majority of WIL. They disagreed only on whether discussion on past organisational differences be closed for discussion or not in the new fused organisation. The TO had requested that their representation be included in a joint panel. They were advised during the negotiations that the WIL caucus had not sufficient confidence in them as representatives of their political position for inclusion in a joint panel. It was therefore suggested by the WIL leadership that the TO should elect their own CC representative plus one alternate, which they did, jointly with the WIL minority. The WIL majority leadership vetoed their first nomination (a member of the WIL minority) for reasons which we can go into if necessary. Had they not done so, let it be stated, their nominee would not have got onto the joint WIL-TO panel.

It is true that the WIL minority were refused special representation on the CC, the reason being that they had no organisational weight or political differences which would give them this right. Since when does a minority have special representation on the basis of “minor organisational differences”, such as whether the WIL were correct or not in its attitude towards the fusion of 1938?

At the fusion conference which formed the RCP the TO and former WIL minority made a verbal statement saying their faction was dissolved. Not only the Lefts, but also the Militant Group proclaimed itself as a faction and retain factional rights.

The Left does not have a “number of miners”. Recently, one of its members entered the pits from the clothing industry. What can be said on this score is that an ex-miner who publishes the Miners’ Militant is in contact with a number of miners as a member of the Labour Party.

There are many other incorrect statements made about this faction which it is not necessary to comment on here.

### **The real discussions at conference**

Ostensibly, the “report” sets out to portray the “fusion of the British Trotskyists,” the capitalist attack against the new party, and the immediate perspectives and tasks ahead. Such a project can only be welcomed – it is indeed laudable in the extreme – if conscientious reporters do the job.

One thing we can say at once about the report penned by Stuart – it is indeed conscientious. But not in explaining the ideas and discussions verbal and written which proceeded and formed the basis of the fused organisation, nor in explaining the birth of the RCP as an objective event whose evolution was observed by the participants, and recorded in the form of resolutions, documents and minutes. Conscientiousness, according to Stuart, does not demand such exacting research and study! It demands from him only a rehash of chit-chat on the back stairs, or scraps of fireside factional gossip! The least the British comrades expected is that a “reporter” would inquire from the source, as to the correctness of certain political opinions allegedly held by them.

One can peruse the “report” throughout without getting the slightest hint of the real discussions that took place at the fusion. Was there a discussion on perspectives; on the tactics arising out of these perspectives; the role of the Labour Party, industrial work, etc., etc.? Not a word on these problems which formed the basis of the discussions and which for so long separated the British Trotskyists – not a word!

The ideas of the participants were before conference in the form of numerous documents and resolutions. There is ample material for a full elucidation of the different positions which could have informed the SWP members of the political differences and been a valuable source of education. Stuart was familiar with these documents, as were the leaders of the SWP. Instead of an analysis of these real differences, we are treated to a disgraceful “report” of alleged differences and alleged deviations, and to a so-called analysis of “weights, measures and directives” which are cock-eyed in any case.

At the conference there were three factions which submitted resolutions and documents: the Militant Group, the “Left”, and the WIL whose political position had the support of the TO. 69 delegates attended the conference on the basis of proportional representation 1 to every 7 members. The delegation was as follows:

RSL: 17 (Militant Group 7; TO 6; Left 4)

WIL: 52

The TO and the WIL minority had a different position from the WIL only on an organisational issue. The latter (TO and WIL minority) presented no independent

political or organisational documents. The only manifestation of their position as opposed to that of the WIL was their opposition to the section of the Fusion resolution, which reads as follows: “In the interests of the fusion, this conference, therefore, dissolves all past organisational conflicts and disputes, and closes discussion on these questions in the British section.”

The main differences at conference centred on the four questions of policy and tactics: military policy, Labour Party tactic, workers’ control and industrial tactics.

The military policy put forward by the WIL and TO was opposed by both the Lefts and the Militant Group and not as Stuart incorrectly reported, by the Lefts only. Both factions argued that it was chauvinist and opportunist. This Resolution on military policy was published in the Fourth International in May 1944. Both the Militant Group and the Left moved resolutions on “revolutionary defeatism”.

The voting on this was as follows:

Left RSL resolution: 4 in favour

Militant Group resolution: 11 in favour

WIL-TO resolution: 57 in favour; 11 opposed; 1 abstention

The tactic of immediate entry into the Labour Party and the complete

subordination of independent party work was put forward as against the tactic of building the party at this stage on the basis of turning the face of the organisation to the factory and trade union movement as an independent force, whilst maintaining at the same time factions in the LP and ILP, not closing the door to the possibility of future entry. The Militant Group and the Lefts together voted against the independent orientation on this question.

The voting was as follows:

For the entrism tactic: 11

For the independent orientation: 58

The slogan of “workers’ control” and the question of industrial perspectives and tactics: the Militant Group and the Lefts held that it was incorrect to raise the slogan of workers’ control as it was raised by the WIL in relation to production in war time. Both claimed that it was a concession to chauvinism and was opportunist.

The “Lefts” claimed that the slogan could only be put forward as arising out of a third Labour government and after such a government had come to power. The Militant Group said that it should only be raised during a period of revolutionary upsurge.

The WIL and the TO argued that the slogan had a propaganda potency at all stages of the struggle during imperialist war, and particularly when Joint Production Committees were being set up and a large scale propaganda was being conducted by the capitalists and their agents in the labour movement. Our



task was to counterpose proletarian control in every phase of “civil” and military life, consciously raising the idea of factory committees and similar organisations as organs of workers’ control and as organs of power; linking the slogans of control constantly to the slogan of Labour to power.

On industrial tactics the WIL resolution had the support of all factions except the “Left”. This resolution urged support for the Militant Workers’ Federation as a stage in the crystallisation of a militant factory leadership on a national scale which would coordinate and direct militant industrial activity in the unions, as well as in the plants.

It was held that the MWF had the possibility of becoming the focal point around which the workers would organise on a local and national scale, when the industrial storm broke.

The “Lefts” argued that the MWF was a paper organisation and should be disbanded. Our task was to operate inside the Stalinist controlled unofficial movement, and if expelled, set up an expelled opposition. The sooner we were expelled from the Stalinist controlled organisation, once we had entered, the better – for our real work will not commence until we are expelled. This will enable us to start an agitation against Stalinist methods in the factories.

It may be said by some of the participants that the above is an over-simplification of the positions taken at conference. But without extensive quotations it is impossible to deal adequately with these differences.

Conference concentrated on the main outstanding questions which had separated the British movement over a period of years and several resolutions from the “Left” were not included on the agenda – e.g. on “sabotage” in relation to the Soviet Union, the national question and China, the Italian revolution, and others,

because of lack of time.

On the fusion resolution (published in the Militant) the “Lefts” abstained. The TO and WIL minority opposed the section ending past organisational conflicts and closing the discussion on these questions. They wished to leave the question open for further discussion.

Briefly, these were the main questions discussed at the fusion conference and which should have been elaborated by Stuart on the basis of the documents if he had wished to give the SWP members a real view of the British movement and the fusion. But he failed to do so.

But if Stuart failed to give a political appreciation of the real discussions and differences, he gave plenty of space to organisational evaluations combined with imaginary political discussions and speeches.

### **Political characterisation based on gossip**

In “indicating” a “deviation of national colouring” Stuart alleges:

“In defence of the resolution on military policy, a leader of the majority in the new CC [comrade Ted Grant is being hit at here - RCP] made some remarks that called forth astonishment and protest, particularly among those in agreement with the resolution, which is by and large a correct statement of the international policy. Characteristic of these remarks was a reference to Montgomery’s Eighth Army as ‘our Eighth Army’. The protests only brought reiteration from the speaker with a stronger emphasis than before: he spoke with pride of ‘our Eighth Army’.” (The emphasis is Stuart’s)

Monstrous falsification! That Stuart should accuse leading British Trotskyists of chauvinism is bad enough.

To tear a phrase out of its context for the purpose of demonstrating a “deviation”, is nothing short of a scandal in the ranks of the Fourth International. And that such stuff should be circulated by the PC of the SWP without a check is not easy to understand.

This “scene” is supposed to have taken place at the fusion conference. This is false. The incident, distorted above, took place at the WIL conference in 1943 during a discussion not on military policy, but on European and British perspectives. The resolution to which comrade Grant was speaking is published in a pamphlet, *The world revolution and the tasks of the British working class*, drafted by him and accepted as a basic document by the fusion conference[44]. The speech referred to is apparently that made by comrade Grant published in *Workers’ International News*, January 1944, and the section reads as follows:

“The moment the Labour Party comes to power will be already its period of decline, of splitting and breaking up. There is more socialist consciousness, a more radical attitude on the part of the masses, than at any other period in history. The armed forces are more revolutionary, look more to the working class and socialism than even the ranks of the working class themselves. That class-consciousness is expressed in the fact that, in relation to the Negro and Indian questions we see solidarity between the Army and the working class.

“We have a victorious Army in North Africa, and Italy, and I say, yes, Long live the Eighth Army, because that is our army. One of our comrades has spoken to a number of people who have had letters from the Eighth Army soldiers, showing their complete dissatisfaction. We know of incidents in the Army, Navy and other forces that have never been reported, and that it is impossible for us to

report. It is our Eighth Army that is being hammered and tested and being organised for the purpose of changing the face of the world. This applies equally to all the forces.”

This speech was edited for publication and several illustrations of minor mutinies and struggles among the ranks of the forces which led to this statement, were omitted because of government censorship.

The background to this speech can be seen when one takes into consideration that the Tories received 14 seats out of 600 in the elections to the mock Forces’ Parliament in Cairo, Labour received the overwhelming votes of the soldiers, Common Wealth next, and then the Stalinists. So great was the radicalisation that the authorities dissolved this “Parliament”. A Trotskyist was elected Prime Minister of the Benghazi “Forces’ Parliament” which was also disbanded.

Another indication of the radicalisation of the Eighth Army: during the tremendous campaign which accompanied the arrests of our party members for “inciting to strike”, the Eighth Army News published a full page article under the headline: The right to strike is one of the freedoms for which we fight”.<sup>[45]</sup>

One would have imagined that the revolutionary content of this speech was clear.

Comrade Grant has pointed to the fact that the capitalists were making a great to do about the Eighth Army, shouting “Long live the Eighth Army”, etc. He cited the incidents to show the class antagonisms and said, “Yes, I say long live the Eighth Army for it is our army that is being hammered and beaten into shape.”

Obviously, what was being spoken about here was not the victorious bourgeois army, but certain revolutionary characteristics which had already manifested themselves and would grow as the war went on – the very opposite to what the bourgeois were shouting about!

The formulation could have been better. But what is being discussed here is the ideas. Comrades who fail to grasp the revolutionary perspective and essence which was being driven home are pedants, or wilfully blind. The least one expects from a responsible member of our international movement when allegations of chauvinism are made against a responsible leading member of a section, is to check the allegation at its source before repeating it in writing, or even in gossip.

Not satisfied with this distortion, Stuart must need go further. He states that comrade Grant “spoke with pride of ‘our Eighth Army’” (his emphasis), which, whatever misconceptions may have arisen over the statement of comrade Grant, is nothing less than a malicious lie.

If one looks for “deviations” in the SWP press and speeches with Stuart’s method, one could find plenty. One is used to such distortions from Shachtman (and it is no accident that he wilfully distorted this point, as he did [with] Cannon’s military policy speeches), but one expects an objective polemic from comrades in the international.

Let us give an example of how we too, could find such “deviations” in the SWP leadership, using Stuart’s method. From the speech on the military policy at the SWP 1940 conference:

“We are sending unlimited supplies of military materials to Europe. In my opinion the only reason why we are not sending troops is that there isn’t any

place to land them.” (Our emphasis a la Stuart)

Could one infer from the above that Cannon means “our” troops? Another example:

“We are willing to fight Hitler. No worker wants to see that gang of fascist barbarians overrun this country or any country...”

“We will join the war as long as the workers do...”

No one can doubt that these formulations could have been better, but one would have to entirely distort the whole content of Cannon’s speech to arrive at a “deviation of national coloration”. In the same way one has to distort the entire revolutionary essence of comrade Grant’s speech to arrive at Stuart’s conclusions.

Let it be remembered that this discussion was taking place among Trotskyists – not a bunch of young imperialists or boy scouts. In dealing with perspectives wouldn’t Stuart consider [it] justifiable to refer to “our Eighth Army” in view of the significant revolutionary developments taking place?

But not content with building this false picture, Stuart wants to make sure that it is firmly implanted in the minds of the American party members. Just in case they didn’t get the “drift”, the “deviation” is traced in another disguise:

“Another view that aroused similar controversy was expressed by the same

leader; namely that the liberation of the European peoples from fascism was to be accomplished (not inspired, aided or furthered) by a socialist Britain in arms”, and “this view even crept into an earlier draft of the resolution, but was corrected after a heated discussion.”

Fortunately, by accident, we have in our files the “original draft” to which Stuart refers[46], with the pencilled alterations. It should not be necessary to have to enter into a discussion on this plane, the allegations are so fantastic. For the purpose of pinning this downright lie, however, and indicating the method by which it is peddled, we will deal with it in detail, reproducing the original “deviation” and its evolution.

### **The history of the “deviation”**

The actual passage in the original draft which is apparently that characterised as a “national deviation” reads as follows (incidentally it was not written by the “same leader” of the WIL but by another):

“Only the working class, by taking power into its own hands can destroy fascism abroad and at home, ushering in a period of peace and plenty for all mankind.”

This is marked by the TO and redrafted as follows:

“The only way in which the British working class can assist the German workers in the struggle against fascism is by waging a resolute struggle for power against their own ruling class at home. Once in power the working class will not hesitate to defend itself by military means against all attacks from hostile capitalism.”

It is further marked by comrade Haston, who originally drafted the resolution, as follows:

“Only the working class, by taking power into its own hands, can destroy fascism abroad and at home and assist the German and European working class to destroy fascism by waging a revolutionary war.”

And the final draft published, also by comrade Haston, reads as follows:

“Only by overthrowing the capitalist state and taking power into its own hands under the leadership of the Fourth International can the British working class wage a truly revolutionary war and aid the German working class to destroy fascism and capitalist reaction.”

If Stuart, or his informants, say that the discussion over this formulation arose on the basis of the idea that WIL members on the drafting committee held “that the liberation of European peoples from fascism was to be accomplished (not inspired, aided or furthered) by a socialist Britain in arms” – they are falsifying the facts in a most disgraceful manner.

Let it be noted that the draft under discussion was the first outline, and was just off the typewriter. It had not even been discussed by the WIL political bureau or the drafting committee. But in order to achieve the most comradely atmosphere and close collaboration between the WIL and the TO, it had been agreed by the WIL to work as closely with the TO as possible in the first formulation stages of the rough draft.



It is perfectly clear from the evolution of the draft resolution that no “heated” discussion took place or could have taken place on this basis. The question is too elementary – even for the un-theoretical and activist WIL!

Not only this. The final draft was unanimously accepted. How does it come then, that an original admittedly rough and unfinished draft, which has been altered with unanimous agreement, should be used in this way? Only for the most disgraceful factional reasons, comrade Stuart.

Let us repeat. Stuart did not consult the leading comrades who were alleged to have expressed verbally and in written form, these false ideas. When he informed the comrades here that he intended to write a report, comrade Grant specifically requested that the leadership in Britain should be shown the results of his effort before publication because of the previous experience of Stuart’s activities. Apparently, he did not think it worthwhile to attempt to correct these comrades who had chauvinistic tendencies.

What kind of “reporting” is this, can we ask, that throws into the arena scraps of factional gossip as a serious characterisation of a tendency; when the author is forced to admit that nowhere is there evidence to establish his facts?

“Thus far”, Stuart is forced to concede, “no other manifestations are recorded. [!] It is quite possible that what may be involved is merely careless thinking, unthought out ideas, mistakes of the moment. As yet not a fragment of a single document has crystallised such a point of view [!!!].”

Let us repeat: no other manifestations are recorded! Not a fragment of a single document has crystallised such a point of view! But there are dozens and dozens of documents giving the lie to the “deviation of a national character,” which Stuart tries to foist upon the comrades whom he so disgracefully slanders.

And this irresponsible stuff is peddled by the SWP leadership as a serious contribution to international education!

## **Great Americanism**

This gossip writing is accompanied by a theoretical haughtiness on the part of Stuart. Referring to our resolution on the military policy (which has been published in the Fourth International without comment), he says it “is by and large a correct statement of our international policy.” (Our emphasis). In its critical content what he is really saying is that “by and small” there are errors and ambiguities; that the British comrades responsible for the drafting of this resolution were not theoretically and politically so well equipped as... Stuart; that we have borrowed the idea, but didn’t get it quite right. We know this is Stuart’s angle from being continually told by him and his associates that we borrow our ideas from the SWP leaders and simply repeat them in our press! Here, if we might say so, is precisely a “deviation of national coloration” – but not on our part. What might be termed “Great Americanism” on the part of Stuart.

Let us admit at once that we borrow from the SWP. But isn’t this precisely internationalism? Our “common experience”? We hope to be able to borrow from other sections, and that they in turn will borrow from us. We know that the American comrades “borrowed” from comrade Trotsky – a function of our international is to assist in borrowing from each other. What is important is whether we understand the ideas we borrow.

Either our military policy resolution was a correct application of the ideas worked out by comrade Trotsky, and should have been stated as such, without qualification – or it was not so good and should have been the subject for advice and discussion. Such discussion on the basis of a resolution – not factional

gossip – could have performed a good educational task in the USA as well as in Britain. Since Stuart is so rash and open of his criticisms of small organisational detail and offers his advice, why evade the important political responsibility?

The fact of the matter is that the resolution on military policy stands four square on the policy of the Fourth International. The “by and large” was mere effect, the factional barb.

### **Perspectives, plan and the ILP**

According to our critic the RCP has no perspective for future work in relation to the ILP. At best “the RCP has carried out only haphazard work in the ILP, mainly literary... leading forces have from time to time been withdrawn... What is needed is a perspective and a plan of work.”

Let us examine this problem a little closer. In the first place, Stuart divorces the ILP from the political situation as a whole, in particular with the perspectives of the Labour Party and the relationship of the ILP to the Labour Party. The conference resolution turning the face of the RCP to independent work, had this to say about the ILP:

“The past perspective [pre-war - RCP] of our tendency was for the complete collapse of the centrist party – the ILP. In fact, the ILP has grown in numerical strength and influence among the workers and is attracting fresh support from growing sections of the left labour and socialist conscious workers, and therefore, offers an important field for faction work on the part of the Fourth International.

“Whereas the ILP will most likely apply for affiliation to the Labour Party and be accepted when the Labour Party breaks the coalition and achieves its independence, it follows that the ILP will become the main left wing organisational base for the leftward moving labour workers and that the ‘socialist left’ and similar paper organisations set up by the Trotskyist entrists will play no part in the Labour Party during the period of mass swing, but on the contrary will be a hindrance to our penetration of the Labour Party and must therefore be abandoned in favour of our factional entry into an affiliated ILP.

“Whereas the perspective of a mass left swing to the LP may at a later stage necessitate a total entry of our forces into the LP, such a perspective is most unlikely, but if this situation arises our forces will probably enter the LP through the affiliated ILP.”

At this particular stage it is in the factories and the unions that the main forces of Trotskyism are being recruited. But we have not neglected the ILP. We have a complete picture of the ILP as a whole and of its active sections continually before us.

On the basis of the general perspectives quoted above, which are constantly tested and concretised by detailed knowledge, we devote a certain amount of time and forces to the ILP. Until recently it has not been necessary, nor, what is more, has it been possible to have a detailed plan of work.

We can fully agree with Stuart that it is possible to set a formal perspective of winning the majority of the ILP. Indeed, such a formal perspective has long been discussed in our ranks. But what we are directly guided by on this tactical issue are the general relationships in the movement, and the concrete possibilities of the material at hand. These in turn, are determined by the actual forces at our disposal inside and outside the ILP.

In explaining the situation in the ILP our critic gives a very distorted picture of the groupings and the possibilities from faction work at this stage.

“At the Easter conference” (1944) we are told, “the rank and file clashed with the leadership on both these issues (affiliation to the LP and opportunist bloc with the middle class Common Wealth) and in the vote defeated them decisively on both...”

What follows this statement implies that the RCP had no influence on these issues. The size of the left wing is grossly exaggerated.

Incidentally, there is no “Sara-Dewar” group in the ILP – there is, or since this Bulletin commenced, was a small group headed by Wicks and Dewar. Sara is in the Labour Party and has been for many years a full time paid lecturer for the National Council of Labour Colleges.

Nor is there in the ILP a “still larger indigenous left wing, containing a good many former CP members – particularly in the mine areas – [which] works with the Trotskyists in close harmony at conference.”

Not a single word of this is correct. There are number of errors of this character, but it is not necessary to deal with all here.

The resolution on Common Wealth was moved by Trotskyists “in close relation with the RCP”, and was an indication of a plan of work. All the credit can go to the RCP. But far from the voting on affiliation being a decisive defeat for the ILP leadership, it was on the contrary, an important victory for them. Their position was overwhelmingly carried. The resolution to convene a special conference to

discuss affiliation to the Labour Party in the event of it breaking the coalition, was their resolution. The opponents of affiliation were largely pacifists and a small number of confused lefts. True, among these latter were some very good rank and file elements – most of whom have been convinced of the correctness of our position since.

Developing his case, Stuart states that “the programme is not at issue. With minor concessions the basic position of the Fourth International is already acceptable to the native left wing.” If by “native left wing” Stuart means ILPers moving to the left and at loggerheads with the leadership (and not the few renegades from Trotskyism) he is very much mistaken in the belief that there is programmatic agreement. The “native left wing” are largely left reformists, still very far from the position of the Fourth International. Here it is not a question of minor concessions on questions of tactics, but an education in revolutionary policy which must guide our actions. If it is the ex-Trotskyists who are being discussed, Stuart is entirely incorrect.

However, in this document, so full of detail, we are not informed what these “concessions” might be, but it is fairly easy to guess.

Inside the ILP the main tactical question which separated us from the Wicks-Dewar faction (which is not the “native” left wing), was the question of affiliation to the Labour Party. We are for affiliation – Wicks and Dewar are against. The perspective of the latter is to split (!) the ILP on the question of affiliation. Hopeless, stupid, utopian sectarianism! A split – even if it could be engineered at this stage and on the basis of the anti-affiliation bloc – would set up a miniature edition of the ILP. The bulk of the splitters would be petit-bourgeois, semi-anarchists and pacifists, and a handful of Trotskyists, doomed to splinter into pieces at the first meeting after the split.

But it is apparently this split perspective which intrigues Stuart. His first perspective is the formal one: to win the majority of the ILP. The second is a

concrete one: to split the ILP on the affiliation issue.

Speaking of this type of tactic, one of the leading American comrades said that what was important was to strike while the iron was hot. But Stuart wants to strike while the iron is not yet in the fire. To be successful, such a tactic, even in the most favourable circumstances, must take up a great deal of time and energy of the party whose forces should be concentrated at the point of attack. But as we estimate it, the situation in the ILP is very different from that portrayed by Stuart. There has not yet grown the left wing or the ferment, thus the time is not yet ripe. And even if it were ripe, it would not be worth diverting the efforts of our members from more favourable fields of activity at the present stage of the struggle.

The anti-affiliationist policy is a sectarian trend. And it is precisely to this trend that Stuart wants to make concessions. If a split on this issue were successful it would have the opposite effect to what comrade Stuart seems to think. It would isolate the revolutionary wing who would be outside the ILP at the period of its entry into the Labour Party – just at that period when it would begin to offer a real milieu of work.

Throughout the working class movement there is a growing desire for unity on the part of the worker. The opportunist leadership of the ILP, tired of the wilderness and hoping to avoid responsibility of leadership in the great battles ahead, want to climb back into the Labour Party and a safe milieu of work. Their attitude toward affiliation is an opportunist one. But to combat them we have to counterpose a revolutionary attitude. Affiliation is entirely correct and in line with the historical trend and tasks. From every point of view affiliation would be advantageous to us. It would clarify the position of the ILP leadership as out and out reformist, not to be distinguished from the “left” Labour bureaucrats; it would intensify the differentiation within the ILP and help to crystallise the revolutionary wing; the ILP would act as a medium for organising the leftward movement of Labour workers who can be won to Trotskyism through our faction. The Labour leaders and the ILP leaders understand the

position well: they would like nothing better than that the Trotskyists break from the ILP at this stage.

What weight has this so-called broader, non-Party Trotskyist faction, to whom we must make such “concessions”? The Wicks-Dewar faction had 9 members when Stuart penned his work, and no influence outside London. Since then, the best members – the younger elements – are now in the party, Wicks and Dewar remaining outside and officially dissolving their faction.

This advice on the ILP work is particularly irritating when it is taken into account that this is the first that we have heard from Stuart or any other American comrade on the subject. An elementary understanding of international work would indicate that the normal and obvious course for an IS or SWP delegate would have been to thoroughly discuss the question with the party leadership, before giving advice – advice obviously not intended for the leadership, since he had plenty of opportunities to offer this in discussion. Not even Trotsky would have deemed it proper to do this.

In any event, even if Stuart’s information on the incidental questions had been correct, at the very least it was light-minded and irresponsible to give a “directive” on a secondary question such as this, without taking the trouble to familiarise himself with the whole of the party work, the balance of forces, etc., etc., of which he is entirely ignorant even today.

His presumption is particularly glaring in the case he instanced of Roy Tearse. For months before his withdrawal, comrade Tearse was purely a nominal member of the ILP. His retention in fact, would have damaged us, as events have shown. It was far more important for comrade Tearse to conduct the open activity of the party in the industrial field, which has shown such good results for the party. Had Stuart taken the trouble to discuss the question, he could not have doubted this for a moment. But isn’t it rather fantastic that we have to write to the American comrades and discuss an organisational detail such as this? What



would the comrades think if we had to intervene in a similar fashion in the organisational work of the American party, on the basis of some careless gossip that we had heard in private from some comrades, without a knowledge of the facts? What would the American comrades think if we demanded to know why so-and-so had been withdrawn from the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, and sent to do open work in Minneapolis?

This “example” (the withdrawal of comrade Tearse) is given to “prove” that the “policy of sporadic withdrawal must be replaced by a policy of building the left wing”! What withdrawals, comrade? Name them. As a matter of fact in some years of factional work we have taken only two or three people out of the ILP – and then only for good reasons. On the other hand, we have placed and retained in the ILP several comrades that we could ill spare from other important work – not from the point of view of immediate gains – but entirely from the point of view of long term perspective. Far from sporadic withdrawals all the people we gain in the ILP, remain there. This is an elementary question which is part of our whole organisational practice.

The example of comrade Tearse’s withdrawal is introduced to show that we have only conducted “haphazard work” in the ILP. Here is the evidence that we lack a “perspective”, a “plan of work”. What does Stuart think our comrades in the ILP have been doing over the past few years – playing hop-scotch?

It is significant that Stuart, who is supposed to be giving a directive on “perspectives” if you please... precisely fails to raise the question of perspectives! Since 1938 we have predicted the inevitable gravitation of the ILP to its reformist home – the Labour Party. We have based our perspective inside and outside the ILP on this prognosis. It is an astonishing thing that not once in his treatise, is this all important issue – precisely in relation to perspective – mentioned, i.e. affiliation to the Labour Party. One cannot even begin to talk about “perspective” without dealing with this question.

To say that our work was “mainly literary” is just ridiculous. In fact this side of our work has not been sufficiently developed. Not because we did not have any perspectives, comrade Stuart, but because of many factors, including paucity of forces.

After years of patient work with young, inexperienced comrades, our work in the ILP is taking shape. All the pseudo-Trotskyists groupings are united now – but in the party. We are penetrating into new districts where we formerly had no members or influence. But even now this work is in its early stages. Our perspective in the ILP is not one of “Get rich quick”, but of patient accumulation.

More recently, some of the SWP comrades have posed the orientation of the party towards the ILP from the standpoint of a campaign for fusion. No doubt we shall shortly be hearing from their friends in the British party posing these original ideas. It is our conception that fusion is posed in revolutionary politics when there is a substantial measure of agreement on the fundamental programme, and a fair measure of agreement on the secondary tactical issues; or it is posed as a tactical manoeuvre to sharpen out a dispute already in existence, with the purpose of securing a consolidation of the left centrist minority with the revolutionary party, and a split.

Whatever perspective is set, the struggle for fusion must be the centre of the party’s orientation and activity – if it is to achieve the desired effect. The whole weight of the party must be thrown into the breach, at the point of attack. But an elementary acquaintance with the evolution of the ILP in the past ten years, would rule out the first perspective at this stage of the struggle. Later, it may pose itself in the midst of a revolutionary upheaval.

The ILP, which evolved to the left from 1931 to 1934, has made a steady progression to the right since that date. In the last three years, particularly, that process has been speeded up. As a “principled” turn, fusion could only

exaggerate the revolutionary potential of the ILP, would run counter to its present evolution, it should conflict with our general perspective and confuse our sympathisers on a national scale.

As a tactical manoeuvre it also runs contrary to our general perspective. After discussion over a period of months by our political bureau, it was rejected, because it would not compensate for the withdrawal from other more favourable fields of work – even if successful.

The present phase of the struggle in Britain and the relation of forces makes it impossible to effectively shatter the ILP and remove it as an obstacle in our path at this stage. Were we to split the left wing away, as we explained before, we would only isolate them in the next phase of the struggle. The Labour Party leaders are seeking a left cover and they are finding it in the ILP. Bereft of the Trotskyists and its own left wing, the ILP will still be an attractive force for the leftward moving Labour workers when it is inside the Labour Party. Inside the Labour Party, when fresh forces, moving to the left, seek expression through the ILP, the whole problem of fusion and split will be posed on a different plane. But that is the music of the future and not at all of today.

### **A sore thumb**

A consistent theme which runs through Stuart's Bulletin like a "sore thumb", to use one of his own phrases, is that the leadership of the ex-WIL was and is theoretically weak and is especially characterised by "infectious activism". To balance this, we are told that the former RSL was more strongly inclined to "pay serious attention to theory". This is accompanied by allegations that WIL had a "somewhat sectarian spirit" and a mechanical approach towards other groups. Proof? There is not a shadow! Let us pose a question to comrade Stuart: [can you] show us a single document dealing with questions of theory or policy to back up your assertions?

“Naturally,” says Stuart, “the leadership carries over into the RCP all positive as well as the negative characteristics that attached to it in the WIL.”

This is emphasised by the statements – not proved, merely asserted – that the leadership had previously approached work with other organisations in a “mechanical, somewhat sectarian spirit”. Such material can only have value for our movement if backed by examples – concrete examples of alleged failures. In the absence of such examples we can only ask the SWP membership to conclude that this criticism has no validity.

Let Stuart explain the evolution of the British movement for the past six or seven years on the basis of this assertion. He will find it very difficult. For our part, we are not prepared to open up old wounds and go over sterile discussions of the past which can have value only for the archive rat or the historian of the future, but which would only introduce the antagonisms of the past into the fused party, and therefore be a godsend to the professional faction fighter.

The statement that “we will have to learn how to learn from the membership, as well as how to teach it” can only mean that we did not do so in the past, and therefore as a leadership, lacked the most elementary understanding of the role of leadership.

We know that some of our American comrades pride themselves on their work in the organisational sphere. We are not exactly strangers to the work of the American party. We followed the discussion with the Burnham-Shachtman-Abern faction, and all the factions before that, and we were not unimpressed. But pardon us if we feel annoyed at such utter drivel being put into circulation in all seriousness – particularly when this stuff comes from a self-styled theoretician of the “organisational” school. Under far more difficult conditions than those faced by our American comrades, and without the personal guidance and authority of

comrade Trotsky we have slowly and painfully overcome the liabilities of a bad start, and we have built something here of which we are by no means ashamed. Maybe comrade Stuart should learn a little from the British party.

Stuart states that the two sections underwent a unique development. The official section, the RSL, he says developed a strong sectarian current while the WIL apparently developed the transitional programme correctly. How this evolution is explained – in face of the low political level of the WIL – we are not told. Nor could he explain it. For if the facts about the unique development as stated by Stuart are correct, his conclusions are entirely contrary to the materialist interpretation of events. For purely factional ends, materialist interpretation is replaced by idealistic invention – and not so idealistic at that! It is not necessary to go into a lengthy refutation of this nonsense. We can only say to our American comrades who are students of this question: read the respective documents, read the respective publications which should be procurable at SWP headquarters.

“The fusion” says Stuart, “coming at the end of a bitter internal struggle in both organisations, has of course, left some wound scars.” This is intended to create a false impression of the real situation as it existed before the fusion. If Stuart did not like the truth, he should at least have remained silent instead of deliberately falsifying by implication. As everyone in Britain knows, and as the leaders of the SWP know: the RSL before the fusion was divided into three separate and distinct organisations. The RSL was dissolved by the IS and had to be specially reconstituted a few weeks prior to the fusion with the WIL, a politically united organisation. The impression is given that the WIL minority was a substantial factor. It had no political differences and at the last WIL conference it received one vote. To say that there was a “bitter internal struggle” on a par with that in the RSL is to create an entirely different picture.

## **The motive**

The historical outline of the pre-fusion period is false in one particular after another and is entirely confusing. It is not proposed here to go into the political and tactical differences – alleged and real – which are the headaches of the future historian! But when Stuart concluded this prelude with the statement: “The minority of the RSL which held the position of the FI, correctly saw a solution only in the fusion of the two organisations. Neither the sectarian majority of the RSL or the WIL would at first countenance such a solution...” it creates a very incorrect impression. There is not one single document Stuart can produce to prove such an assertion or indicate the truth of the above statement; but there are many documents in the archives of the IS which tell a different story. We do not think it necessary to produce these documents here. Sufficient to say that neither faction was in existence when the negotiations commenced between the WIL and the RSL for fusion.

Late in the fusion discussions, Stuart worked in close conjunction with the TO and the minority of the WIL when it arose. The thesis worked out by Stuart in writing was that the TO-WIL minority were the loyal fourth internationalists. That is to say, they agreed with Stuart and his immediate friends – that the WIL and the other factions of the RSL were lacking in internationalism; and that it was necessary to keep the loyal faction in being at all costs. There is a whole literature on this question in the archive of the SWP leadership. We published in this country a letter from an American comrade together with our reply, as well as a factional letter from Stuart to the TO (not intended for publication). We suggested that the SWP membership be let into these discussions as well – but they were not.

Before the fusion took place, Stuart wrote a closed letter to the TO urging the retention of the loyal faction even in the event of fusion. “The TO’s programme presages a long term perspective, however, and it should prepare to maintain itself on this programme for a considerable time to come, no matter what organisational turns the situation may take.” It was part of this considered policy of keeping this faction – with no political differences – in being, that Stuart “report” was penned.

Since the fusion all negotiations and arrangements with the comrades inside the party and with European comrades in Britain are made through the faction or one of its members. The leadership of the British party are not informed of these arrangements and discussions and learn of them only by accident or not at all. Most of the time of Stuart and his friends are spent with the faction who do not inform the party of what discussions take place.

Why this faction, or clique, lacking political differences, is to be kept in being, we do not know. It is for reasons best known only to Stuart and his friends. For our part, we can only chart the fact.

Comrades of the SWP! Consider Stuart's "report" again. A polemic from beginning to end against the ex-WIL and RSL leaderships, and statements only of their alleged incapacity. All the organisational nonsense and detail can have no real value for the SWP. The purpose of the Bulletin? A sort of honourable mention for the loyal friends of Stuart.

It may be that the leadership of the RCP is backward, incompetent, and should be replaced by more capable and more loyal comrades. But if Stuart wants to aid this process he will have to lift the polemic from the plane of gossip and manoeuvre to a political level.

Comrade Stuart was unlucky. He was badly informed! But so is every peddler of gossip who orients himself on gossip. There was no need for him to make these blunders – he was asked to check them. But he was not interested in checking them.

A capable leadership, nationally and internationally, can only be created as part of a genuine international and national collaboration and through honest political discussion and education. It will never be created by an organisational sleight of

hand. In Britain, we republish important political discussion material we receive from America. This we do as part of our international education. Despite meagre technical resources we are glad to do so, because this gives a real political bond with the American party. But we would never, under any circumstances, publish the gossip that we hear from American comrades of all tendencies. In particular, we would never publish a criticism of the official leadership which came to us from factional sources (unless it was a public document in circulation in the SWP) without prior consultation with the leadership for verification or refutation.

Maybe we have a naïve, or incorrect, or formalistic attitude towards international collaboration and work. But we believe that the leaderships of the national sections have a certain duty and loyalty to each other. Trotsky taught us to be loyal, and he taught us to be careful with gossip. In the Comintern in the best days, reports of national sections were official reports. Of course, the minority has always the right to add its piece. This method of Lenin is the only way that loyal international collaboration can be conducted. Stuart's method is harmful and can only lead to conflict and disruption. Let us hope that this kind of "reporting" will now be discontinued and we will not be involved in a discussion such as this in the future.

In concluding this letter, let us say that we have had no pleasure in penning it. It is with the greatest reluctance that we have taken time off from more pressing political tasks. If the tone appears sharper than some comrades think necessary in the circumstances, let us say we have deliberately toned down. We wish to minimise and not exaggerate the situation. The responsibility for the conflict rests entirely on the shoulders of Stuart and his immediate friends. We want a loyal international collaboration with the SWP and its leadership with whom we have political agreement on all outstanding questions. We object, however, to the American leadership, or a faction of it, having organisational faction or clique irons in the British fire. That is the international method of Zinoviev and not of Trotsky.



We have entered an epoch which is our epoch. The great tasks that face us and the struggles that lie ahead will demand the fullest fraternal collaboration and assistance in the spirit of Bolshevism. The SWP and the RCP have been fortunate in that we have not suffered the ravages of the reaction, which have been suffered by our European comrades. A loyal collaboration between us will have important repercussions in Europe; will be a tremendous step towards solidifying all sections of the Trotskyist movement. Such a loyal collaboration, however, must be based upon political clarity, agreement and honesty and not upon petty gossip mongering and organisational manoeuvre.

Political bureau, January 1945

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## Notes

[\[1\] Royal Ordnance Factory](#)

[\[2\] The WIL conducted an energetic campaign against the strike-breaking attitude of Joseph Hall, president of the Yorkshire Miners' Association. See also Ted Grant, Writings, Vol. 1, pp. 254-8.](#)

[\[3\] Unfortunately it has not been possible to trace a copy of this letter.](#)

[\[4\] Our source is a 1975 reprint. Unfortunately it has not been possible to locate](#)

a copy of the original.

[5] Ted Grant, Writings, Volume 1, p. 296-317.

[6] Leon Trotsky, War and the Fourth International, June 10 1934.

[7] Ted Grant, Writings, Volume 1, p. 40-45.

[8] The Socialist Labor Party of America led by Daniel DeLeon.

[9] The Alien Registration Act of 1940 (known also as the Smith Act), which allowed the prosecution for anti-government seditious activities, was first used to behead the US Socialist Workers' Party. In October 1941 the whole leadership of the SWP was put on trial in their stronghold of Minneapolis and most of them were condemned to up to 16 months of prison. The conduct of the defendants and the political nature of the attack gained them the respect of a broad layer within the US labour movement.

[10] Vincent R. Dunne was one of the leaders of the victorious teamsters' strikes of 1934-5 in Minneapolis.

[11] The Workers' Party, which split in 1940 from the US Socialist Workers' Party.

[12] Here Ted Grant refers to the letters sent by Cooper and Stuart to British comrades. The reply of the leadership of the WIL to these letters is published in this volume.

[13] The Trotskyist Opposition was a faction of the Revolutionary Socialist League (British section of the Fourth International) led by Lawrence. The Socialist Workers' Group was a splinter group of the RSL.

[14] Émile Coué (February 26, 1857 – July 2, 1926): French psychologist and pharmacist who introduced a method of psychotherapy and healing based on optimistic autosuggestion.

[15] Internationalist opponents of the First World War met in September 1915 in the Swiss village of Zimmerwald. The February revolution in Russia 1917 saw the fall of the Tsar and brought to power a provisional government of reformist and capitalist parties.

[16] Established in 1889 bringing together social democratic (socialist) and labour parties. It effectively collapsed in 1914 when virtually all of its sections voted to support their own capitalist governments in the war. It was revived in 1923 as a completely reformist organisation becoming known as the Socialist International.

[17] Independent Labour Party. Usually on the left, it split from the Labour Party in 1932. Most of its leaders returned to the Labour Party after the war, leaving it to a prolonged period of sectarian isolation until it was wound up in the late 1970s.

[18] The Spartacus League led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, grew out of the revolutionary wing of the German Social Democracy, breaking with the SPD on the question of war and enthusiastically supporting the Russian October. As the German revolutionary explosion of 1918 was contained by the Social Democracy within bourgeois limits, the Spartacists attempted an insurrection in 1919 which was premature and was bloodily repressed. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were murdered.

[19] Lenin, “The impending catastrophe and how to combat it”, Collected Works, Vol. 25, pp. 323-69.

[20] After Louis Blanqui (1805-81). French revolutionary socialist whose name became linked with the theory of armed insurrection by small conspiratorial groups, as opposed to the Marxist concept of mass struggle.

[21] The Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB), established in 1905, was, and remains, a small sect with its own peculiar “interpretation” of Marxism.

[22] The Transitional programme was adopted by the Fourth International at its

founding congress in 1938. Transitional demands are intended to bridge the gap between the existing level of consciousness of the working class and the need for socialist revolution.

[23] Journal of the RSL.

[24] Max Shachtman. One of the founders of the American Left Opposition, he split from the official Fourth International in 1940.

[25] Franklin D. Roosevelt, a Democrat, was American president from 1933 to 1945. Introduced the “New Deal” programme of state intervention intended to deal with economic recession while heading off the radicalisation of the working class. Wendell Willkie was the Republican Party presidential candidate in 1940.

[26] The short-lived workers’ government established after the uprising of the Paris workers on March 18 1871. It was crushed on May 28th, with over 20,000 workers murdered. Fully dealt with in Trotsky’s On the Paris Commune and Marx’s The Civil War in France.

[27] The Common Wealth party was formed in Britain during the war. Advocating radical policies including nationalisation, and opposing the wartime electoral truce, it won substantial votes and two by-elections.

[28] The revolutionary approach proposed by Trotsky towards the problem of

war was referred to as “proletarian military policy”.

[29] Stuart was the pseudonym of Sam Gordon, member of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International who visited Britain in the summer of 1942. The secret letter to John Lawrence was sent in February 1943. Lou Cooper was a leading cadre of the US SWP.

[30] The British Trotskyists’ unification conference of 1938 led to the formation of the Revolutionary Socialist League. The Workers’ International League opposed the terms of the unity agreement as unprincipled and decided not to join the RSL, which was then recognised as the official section of the Fourth International. The WIL could not send delegates to the founding conference of the Fourth International held in Paris in September 1938, but submitted a document, the Statement of WIL to the international congress of the Fourth International, asking to be officially recognised as a sympathising section and proposing a path towards clarification and unification of British Trotskyism. See, Ted Grant, Writings, Vol. 1, pages 46-7.

[31] Denzil Dean Harber (1909–1966) was one of the early supporters of Trotskyism in Britain and the secretary of the RSL.

[32] Alfred Weisbord joined the Trotskyist Communist League of America (CLA) in 1930 after breaking with Stalinism, but immediately split to form the Communist League of Struggle and eventually broke politically with Trotsky in 1934 over the tactic of entrism, which Weisbord regarded as a capitulation to Menshevism. B.J. Field was expelled from the CLA in 1934; after some vicissitudes his group developed some roots and influence especially in Canada. In 1935 a minority faction of the Trotskyist Workers’ Party led by Hugo Oehler refused to accept the majority decision to enter the Socialist Party of America

and split.

[33] The Trotskyist Opposition, led by John Lawrence.

[34] Martin Abern was a leading member of the US young communists and one of the early supporters of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in the USA. Expelled from the CP in 1928, he was one of the founders of the Trotskyist CLA and later of the SWP. In 1940, along with Max Shachtman and James Burnham, he led a bitter factional dispute within the SWP that ended with a split and the formation of the Workers' Party.

[35] Gerry Healy became suddenly the most outspoken partisan within WIL (for his own factional reasons) of immediate unity with the RSL, making a u-turn on his previous fierce opposition to the 1938 unity agreement.

[36] The reference is to World revolution and the tasks of British socialists, the WIL congress document drafted by Ted Grant and passed at the October 1943 conference. It is included in the present volume.

[37] The nickname was commonly used to refer to Trotsky.

[38] For security reasons the text of the speech was “sterilised” before publication in Workers' International News, removing all concrete references to the situation developing in the British Forces, and particularly in the Eighth

Army. Quotations from this speech ripped out of context were subsequently used by some leaders of the US SWP to create the impression in the ranks of the Fourth International of a tendency towards chauvinism in the leadership of the British Revolutionary Communist Party.

[39] The Militant Workers' Federation was formed on initiative of the WIL to organise and coordinate the trade union activities of militant shop stewards throughout the country. It quickly became the main point of reference for advanced workers in all branches of industry seeking for an alternative to the strike-breaking policy of the Stalinists and the trade union leaders.

[40] This resolution, drafted by Ted Grant, was passed at the 1943 national conference of Workers' International League held in London in October. The draft was published under the title A new stage in history and the tasks of the working class in Workers' International News, September 1943.

[41] This refers to the programme under which the USA supplied Britain, the USSR and other Allied nations with materials between 1941 and 1945. Formally titled An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States, the Act was signed in March 1941 and effectively ended the United States' pretence of neutrality. The bulk of the grand total of these supplies (around 60 percent) went to Britain.

[42] This paragraph was added in the final version of the document.

[43] Drafted by Jock Haston.



[44] Published in this volume. The resolution was passed at the WIL conference of October 1943 and submitted by WIL and approved as a basic document at the fusion conference of March 1944.

[45] In the original, the headline was mistyped as: The right to strike is one of the freedoms for which we strike.

[46] This is the WIL resolution on military policy, drafted by Jock Haston and passed at the fusion conference.

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