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RESOLUTION ON THE AMERICAN QUESTION

By J. R. Johnson

I. The Nature of the Task

In the sitdown strikes of 1935-37, the American working class demonstrated that it was striving to raise itself to the level of the tasks imposed upon it by history, that is to say, to create a socialist society. Since that time it has moved with gigantic strides, until today in its most advanced sections it challenges the bourgeois ideas of production, distribution and exchange on a national scale and backs up these conceptions with a many-millioned strike. This unprecedented radicalization of a giant working class is taking place without the corresponding development of a revolutionary party. If in 1938, (for historical reasons) the growth of the party lagged behind the radicalization of the masses, (Trotsky), then today the revolutionary organizations (WP and SWP) lag further behind than ever from the American proletariat and its allied classes.

It would be fatal for the Party to comfort itself with the idea that this lack of growth of the Party is merely proof of the backwardness of the American working class. No revolutionary can deny the possibility that two years from today the American proletariat could cover the nation with soviets (or their equivalent) in a nation-wide strike against the bourgeoisie, or more serious still, against the intervention of government in the struggles of the proletariat with capital.

The bourgeoisie and the government have shown that they are aware of the explosive character of the situation. The ideological battle between planned economy and free enterprise, between capitalism and socialism, between the power of the bourgeoisie and the power of the proletariat is now a commonplace in the daily press and political forums.

Formerly, awareness of the contradictions of American capitalism have been to a large degree the property of the Marxists alone. Today, they are increasingly the property of the great masses of the people. The development of the economy during the war has intensified the threat of mass unemployment and the threat of social revolution.

In the international field it is a commonplace that the U.S. is committed to maintaining its power in every quarter of the globe for economic, as well as for political reasons. Its rivalry with Russia is now becoming as familiar a feature of the world situation as was the rivalry of Britain and Germany before World War I.

If large masses of the American people, however, have

been forced by the objective situation to recognize these contradictions of capitalism, yet the latest phenomenon, American imperialism as the oppressor of the entire world, is not yet clear to them. The direct oppression of the Philippines, Porto Rico, etc. has always seemed insignificant in comparison with the colonial empires of Great Britain and France. The indirect oppression of Latin-America has in recent years been wrapped in the haze of Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy. The exploitation of China has been glossed over by the pretentious elevation of the Chiang-Kai-Shek regime to a role as one of the leaders of the United Nations. Yet the outstanding fact of American imperialism after World War II is that it is the greatest capitalist-imperialist nation and has succeeded Great Britain as the bulwark of capitalist tyranny the world over. It is compelled to maintain the bankrupt economies of the capitalist regimes on a world scale against the socialist revolution. It must do this also for the purpose of preparing and maintaining a field for that world-wide exploitation which it sees as the only solution to the tremendous growth of its own productive forces.

But if the American masses are not as fully aware of this as they ought to be, among the scores of millions abroad who are being daily subjected to the tyranny and hypocrisy of American imperialism, there is rapidly growing a recognition of its true role. To the revolutionary pressure of the American proletariat at home, there is being inexorably added the tremendous revolutionary sentiment abroad which increasingly finds in American imperialism the direct and indirect opposition to the achievement of immediate necessities and revolutionary aims.

II. Trotsky and the Transitional Program

To meet this situation, the Fourth International is equipped with the transitional program, in the U.S. as in the rest of the world, the program for the epoch of the death agony of capitalism in its transition to the social revolution.

The essence of the transitional program is as follows: In the epoch of the death agony of capitalism, the revolutionaries emphasize constantly before the masses the tasks of the social revolution, while losing no opportunity to snatch this or that partial concession from the class enemy. Exactly opposite is the policy of the opportunists. They point out the torments and miseries which capitalism imposes on the masses but concentrate on the immediate demands. They do not see the immediate task as the systematic mobilization of the proletariat for the social revolution, although they often take care to emphasize that final emancipation can be gained only by the ultimate abolition of the capitalist regime.

While the American proletariat is not as subjectively

ready for revolution as the proletariat in France today, the task of the Party in the U.S. is to adapt the minds of the American masses to the objective need for revolution.

"The present epoch is distinguished not for the fact that it frees the revolutionary party from day-to-day work but because it permits this work to be carried on indissolubly with the actual tasks of the revolution...It carries on this day-to-day work within the frame-work of the correct actual, that is, revolutionary perspective." (Founding Conference, pp.18-19).

In such an epoch, the Party in the U.S. must distinguish sharply between the method of revolution and the method of reformism. Because in its present stage the party is unable actually to carry out revolutionary action, the Party's function is to propose, i.e., to propagandize for the revolutionary as opposed to the reformist action. Revolutionary propaganda, revolutionary agitation, are not confined to the actual moment when the masses are summoned "to the barricades" arms in hand for the actual seizure of power. It is by this petty-bourgeois romanticism that pre-1914 Menshevism preached socialism and practiced opportunism. All propaganda, all agitation, must be carried on "from the point of view of revolution as opposed to reformism, systematically to explain this difference to the masses theoretically and practically at every step of parliamentary, trade union, co-operative work." (Lenin) This is not a matter of an actual revolutionary situation but a matter of years of preparation. The masses and the party must be trained for revolution, and it is to this training that the Bolshevik party owed its success at the moment of the actual overthrow of the bourgeoisie.

The Revolutionary Mobilization of the Masses

In the death agony of capitalism in general and in the U.S. in particular, what is basic to the transitional program is propaganda by the revolutionary party for the self-activity of the workers. Trotsky has given in detail for the U.S. the basis of this self-mobilization. It is the factory committee and other rank and file organizations of the workers. The Party must distinguish itself from all other proletarian organizations by seizing every opportunity to propagandize for:

- Factory committees to inspect the books
- Factory committees to control production
- Factory committees to control the national income
- Farmers committees to inspect the books of the banks
- Factory committees to act as workers' defense guards

Propaganda for the factory committee, i.e., for the self-mobilization of the masses is the core of the transitional program. Unless this is the center of the Party's propaganda and agitation, the slogan of Workers' Control of Production is

a meaningless abstraction.

The need to reduce the high cost of living is one of the simplest of immediate demands always with us. But the way in which the Bolsheviks proposed that it be accomplished led to the October Revolution. The transitional program seeks to prepare the masses for their October. Any other conception of the transitional program is false to the core and ruinous for the Party's effective development.

"The sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments, advancing new militant leaders..., but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organizations corresponding more closely to the problems of mass struggle in bourgeois society." (Founding Conference, p. 22)

The Party constantly brings before the workers the need to organize for their own self-defense. "In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self-defense." (Founding Conference, p. 28) The workers militia in the October Revolution itself was a minority but propaganda for this idea won this minority to the party and prepared the minds of the masses to give it sympathy and support. (Trotsky)

The Building of the Party

The Party does not wait for events to make revolutionary propaganda. "To wait and see and then to (propagandize) is to act like the rearguard and not like the vanguard" (Trotsky). The inevitability of new waves of sit-down strikes imposes upon the Party a propagandistic necessity. "It is necessary to begin a campaign in favor of factory committees in time in order not to be caught unawares." (Founding Conference, p. 23) "Preparatory work is already being done by the confidential staff and by trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organizations, woe to the proletariat if it is again caught unawares!" (Ibid. p. 27) This propaganda is not only the warning and the preparation of the proletariat for the social revolution. It is the means by which the Party attracts revolutionary elements to itself and concretely develops its own forces.

Theoretical articles, while absolutely necessary, do not constitute the revolutionary propaganda by which a party (as different from a propaganda circle) is built. Agitation for the revocation of a no-strike pledge or for withdrawal of labor members from a government Labor board are necessary and useful at all times, particularly in wartime. But concentration on this as a means of developing into a party the propaganda group which has turned to the masses, is in direct contradiction with the whole aim and method of the transitional

program. The result is a waste of revolutionary energy and a sense of futility. Thus, it is on the basis of propaganda for revolutionary action that the propaganda group builds itself into the mass revolutionary party. Over the years of sharpening crisis it educates the vanguard to accept its propaganda and gradually impresses itself upon the mentality of the masses as the organization to which they can turn for revolutionary action. Any other course means capitulation to the backward mentality and illusions of the masses.

Trotsky and The Slogan of the Labor Party

It is only in the light of the self-mobilization of the masses, as posed by the transitional program that the slogan of the Labor Party for the U.S. has revolutionary content. The idea of the Labor Party must be concretized as a party which will take power in the state - with factory committees for the control of industry, control of the national income, and workers' defense guards. "Otherwise it is an abstraction and an abstraction is a weapon in the hands of the opposing class." (Trotsky). Every bourgeois and reformist proponent of the Labor Party unwaveringly inculcates into the masses the idea of a constitutional Labor Party (even one which is for socialism and a planned economy). The Fourth International enters this movement in order to tear to pieces these reformist illusions and to link the idea of a Labor Party to mortal struggle against the bourgeoisie. Thus, by our intervention, the struggle for the Labor Party in the U.S. becomes a struggle between the opportunist current and the revolutionary current.

This is also the significance to be given to the idea of a Workers Government. If the Party does not tie the conception of a Workers Government to revolutionary action, then it reinforces in the minds of the masses democratic and pacifist illusions. (Trotsky)

No shadow of doubt must exist in the Party about Trotsky's conception of the Labor Party and the Workers Government. The Party (1938) was to be guided by the idea of a strategic offensive. "This strategic offensive must be led by the idea of the creation of workers' soviets to the creation of a workers-farmers government." The slogan of soviets should not be launched immediately "especially because the word has not the significance for the American workers that it has for the Russian workers...It is very possible and probable that in the same manner we observed in the U.S. sit-down strikes, we will observe in a new form the equivalent of soviets,...In a certain period soviets can be replaced, (i.e., can be substituted for) by factory committee, then from a local scale to a national scale. We can't foretell but our strategic orientation for the next period is the orientation toward soviets. The whole transitional program must fill up the gaps between conditions today and the soviets tomorrow." (Trotsky)

Trotsky did not put forward this program because he expected the revolution to take place within a few weeks or a few months. He stated explicitly that the actual resolution of the crisis by dictatorship might be held off for years but the objective situation demanded that the Party begin preparation. The war would retard the manifestations of the development for a time but would only accelerate it afterward. For this reason it was "absolutely necessary immediately" to "introduce (these ideas) into the masses and into our own comrades."

In 1938 Trotsky could see only the movement from Green to Lewis and from Walker to LaGuardia as an indication of the movement of the masses. He based his analysis upon the contradictions of American capitalism in this stage of its development in the death agony of capitalism and particularly upon the mass eruption of the CIO. 1938 was not ended before the progress of Father Coughlin proved the rightness of his estimate of the general strategic line.

Today, these ideas are not in the minds of the Workers Party membership as a whole. Instead, any approach towards them is considered to be romanticism, adventurism, and petty-bourgeois radicalism. The struggle to build the revolutionary party in the United States is the struggle to restore to the Party from top to bottom Trotsky's strategic orientation towards the masses on their march toward the social revolution.

III. The Revolutionary Pressures of the American Proletariat

The fundamental weakness of the American revolutionary party is its conception that the American masses are not ready for revolutionary propaganda because they have not yet formed an Independent Labor Party. Because of this conception, the Party is blind to the instinctive strivings of the American proletariat to lift itself to the tasks imposed upon it by history, strivings which in the process of the struggle become less instinctive every day. Of this revolutionary pressure of the masses the bourgeoisie and the reformist labor bureaucracy show an understanding and awareness which is completely lacking in the leadership of the Workers Party. Hence a heavy responsibility falls upon the revolutionary movement, both for its own education and for the education of the proletariat, to make a scrupulous analysis of the objective movement of the American proletariat.

The American Proletariat During the War

"In 1939 the National Resources Board reported to the President as follows on the 'basic characteristics' of the American economy:

'Moreover, as people become increasingly aware of the

discrepancy between rich resources and poor results in living and as the ineffectiveness in the organization of resources becomes more clear, a sense of social frustration must develop and be reflected in justified social unrest and unavoidable friction. Individual frustration builds into social frustration. And social frustration is quite as likely to work itself out in socially destructive as in socially constructive ways...The opportunity for a higher standard of living is so great, the social frustration from the failure to obtain it is so real, that other means will undoubtedly be sought if a democratic solution is not worked out. The time for finding such a solution is not unlimited.

"Such was a brief but exact representation of the complex social relations in the U.S. of A. in 1939. And all the more convincing because of the source and circumstances from which it comes.

"The influence of the war has merely accentuated these developments which were already so powerful in the decade before its outbreak. And if, as is inevitable in war, their full fruition has been retarded, the result must be their outburst with renewed force at some stage in the coming period. To begin with, the war has prepared the population for a social crisis to a degree that was impossible except by the state organization of the economy. By the millions, men have been torn from their homes and passed through the military machine. By the millions, the more backward elements have been dragged from rural stagnation, women from their homes and petty-bourgeois from offices, and hurled into the discipline of large-scale capitalist production. Never has there been such an uprooting in American life. The country has undergone a profound social upheaval, the greatest the proletariat has ever known.

"Not only has the war disrupted normal existence to this unprecedented degree. Side by side with this it has compelled a growing consciousness among all ranks of the proletariat that production is a social process in which labor has both rights and responsibilities. In 1929, in the minds of the workers, organized labor was a small section of the population, the capitalists another, and government a third, three different entities. The breakdown of the system of "free enterprise" in 1929 resulted in a steady growth in social and class consciousness. By 1939, "free enterprise" had disguised itself as "management" in order to emphasize its social role in production. Organized labor now looked upon itself as entitled to a voice in the management of the productive process and looked to government as the responsible mediator of conflicting social claims. Already, however, by 1940, as

was shown by the Reuther Plan, the UAW, one of labor's most advanced sections, opposed itself to "management" as a candidate for the organization of production in the interests of society as a whole. The last three years have seen a truly astonishing development of the social consciousness of organized labor. This development of social consciousness has been as powerful as it is because of the social role of the state. Directly and indirectly the government has interfered in and controlled every aspect of economic and social life, from wages, working conditions, food and clothing, to the date of the conception of children and, in the Army, even the right to marry.

"After World War I the resentment of the working class against all that it had to suffer was directed more against Morgan, Wall Street and private capital than the government. In World War II the hostility and the exasperation resulting from the statification of the economy and the strain of the war have been directed as much against the government as against private capital. The course of the miners' strike, undertaken against the full power of bourgeois society and its state during wartime, shows how deep is the current dissatisfaction among the workers with the existing state of affairs and their consciousness of the center of responsibility. The government recognized this early and has not spared its efforts to counteract the deep anti-war feeling, the skepticism which was the aftermath of World War I, and the sufferings of the people during the depression. Through its highest officials, the President and the Vice-President, it has stimulated the masses by vague but constantly reiterated promises of repayment for the sacrifices of the war by the abolition of what the workers endured in the pre-war period.

"The culminating feature of the whole experience, however, while it permeates the consciousness of the great masses of the people, is, as yet being held, as it were, in solution. But it will break forth with irresistible force as soon as the masses feel upon them the inevitable pressure of capitalist bankruptcy.

"To the many-millioned mass, already sceptical of 'free enterprise', the war effort of the state indicates that a government by planned use of the American productive system can create a society of full employment and plenty for all.

"At the present moment the proletariat is in a state of sullen suspiciousness directed toward the capitalist class in general and the Roosevelt government in particular. Like the bourgeoisie, it confidently expects that the war, at least in Europe, is near enough to its conclusion to justify intensive reparations for the post-war period. The end of this phase of the war can be the signal for the outbreak of the sharpest class struggles. It may even be impossible for the bourgeoisie to suppress them before the actual end of hostilities in Europe.

It is not impossible that a break with Roosevelt may come before the 1944 elections. Such events are quite unpredictable. The decisive question, however, is that, although contradictory currents move among the working class, yet as a whole, it knows what it wants and in millions, in its advanced groups, is determined to have it. It is conscious of great changes ahead in society both at home and abroad. It knows that labor is destined to play a great part in these changes. Such at least is the opinion of the present writer." (J.R. Johnson, The New International, January, 1944).

It is only on the basis of such a fundamental understanding of the American proletariat during the war that the Party can make the Marxist analysis of the post-war social crises and the perspectives opened up both for the American proletariat and the revolutionary movement.

IV. The American Proletariat and the Post-War Social Crisis

The present strikes are the first post-war explosion of a movement which began in 1943.

Just as the American trade union movement carries on tasks which in Europe would be performed by the political arm of labor, so in the strikes, the American workers express the consciousness of great changes ahead in society both at home and abroad and their knowledge that labor is to play a great part in these changes.

The first and most substantial manifestations of this development was the miners' strike of 1943. In relation to the miners themselves, these repeated strikes showed that this powerful section of American labor, in the midst of a war, not once but over a long period, placed its own class interests and its own trade union organization definitely above the organizational apparatus of the government and the embattled official opinion of bourgeois society. This is a very high stage of social and political consciousness and of extreme importance in estimating the present situation. That the miners refused to follow Lewis politically proves the class character of their support of Roosevelt and the sober, calculated class character of their support of Lewis in his repeated defiance of the government. The workers in decisive sections (steel and auto in particular) were ready to follow the miners and take the tremendous revolutionary step of initiating a nation-wide strike in wartime. It was the bureaucratic trade union leadership and the Stalinists who with the greatest difficulty stifled the impulse of the masses. Thus once more the crisis of society was shown to be the absence of revolutionary leadership and not the absence of revolutionary pressure in the masses.

From the miners' strike onwards, the social upheaval and political development inherent in the war and the decline of

American capitalism expressed themselves in significant ways of which only a few can be mentioned. The Negroes all over the country repeatedly demonstrated their hostility to their place in the existing social order, sometimes as in Harlem with calculated and disciplined violence. Regardless of consequences, they repeatedly hurled themselves against Jim Crow in every department of that stronghold of the bourgeois state, the bourgeois armed forces on military duty.

The case of foremen who had hitherto been exclusively the tools of management sought to change allegiance and ally themselves with organized labor.

In repeated instances during the war, the labor lieutenants of capital began to demand not only wage increases but what virtually amounted to a share of the profits, disguised as social insurance. They began also to put forward grandiose plans for nationalization of key industries (the UAW), and all insistently demanded the rights of labor to a place in the management of industry during the post-war period. Thereby, they sought only to appease the masses.

The white collar workers, notably the telephone girls, began to show the influence of labor by the unexpected tenacity of their demands and the undoubted readiness of the rank and file to take militant strike action.

Labor, increasingly conscious of its strength in the Democratic Party, organized itself in the PAC and played the decisive political role in the election campaign of 1944. Thus labor had made one great step forward towards its realization of its own independent role in national politics. Large sections of the petty-bourgeoisie in the PAC, while ostensibly still following Roosevelt, showed their readiness to take a political lead from organized labor.

Numerous wildcat strikes and embryonic rank and file organizations were a revealing symptom of the hostility of the workers to the restraining influence of the labor bureaucrats.

Repeatedly, the advanced sections of labor showed their readiness to suppress anti-Negro manifestations within the ranks of the labor movement. A wave of profound interest in the Negro questions swept through the nation, initiated by the mass struggle of the Negroes themselves, but heightened and sustained by the prevailing social consciousness.

These were the preparation of the proletariat and its allies for the great social crisis of which the present strike wave is but the beginning. It is in this strategic analysis of the development of the American proletariat taking place before our very eyes, that the Party can find the arena for its strategic orientation. Lacking this, it is compelled to

concentrate on the success or failure of such manifestations of lesser importance as the Michigan Commonwealth Federation, and thus lay the basis for opportunism.

The bourgeoisie showed no misunderstanding of the profound antagonism between the organic deep-going insurmountable urge of the toiling masses to tear themselves free from the bloody capitalist chaos and the conservative, patriotic, utterly bourgeois character of the outlived labor leadership. In the mouths of its most distinguished leaders from the President down, it posed the problem as one of a reformed capitalism able to serve the people or violent resistance of the masses ending in social revolution. The ideological struggle as to the means of meeting the crisis exploded in the now historic Wallace-Jones debate.

The GM - UAW Strike

The analysis of the post-war strike wave is the key to the development of the American working class and the application of the revolutionary program.

It is a testimony to the advanced stage of social and political development in the U.S. that from the very beginning all sections of bourgeois thought recognized the strikes for what they were - a sign of the profound dissatisfaction of the American masses with their place in the existing social order. On the other hand, any revolutionary movement which does not recognize this clearly, unequivocally draw the conclusion to the end, and boldly and confidently base policy on it, is doomed to stagnation.

The demands of the UAW strikers, carried to their logical conclusions, are nothing short of initiating a complete change in the American social order. Reuther's proposals amount to labor's running the business of General Motors - apportioning profits and wages. His threat to ask the Supreme Court for an injunction to prevent the OPA raising prices amounted also to a demand to control prices. In other words, he proposed to control the whole productive system. He did not make these claims on behalf of auto workers alone, but on behalf of the nation as a whole. But not only the matter but even the very manner of the claims was significant. Reuther made them with a small army of economists, statisticians, press-relations officers etc. He sought to mobilize national and international opinion behind the demands. By the scope and range of his demands and methods, he, in effect, posed before the working class and the country as a whole, the idea of labor as an alternative controlling force in American society.

It would be an unpardonable and irretrievable error for Marxists not to recognize that Reuther's proposals were, as is infallibly the case in all similar pronouncements, merely a

bureaucratic response to the deep and irresistible currents for social transformation which have been working molecularly in the American masses and are now manifesting themselves imperfectly in bureaucratic channels. It is the duty of the Party not to remain like petty-bourgeois radicals on the surface of events but to penetrate to the very root of these developments. Fundamental to them is the organic elemental hostility to the "degradation, the subordination, the humiliation, the agony of toil, the slavery" of capitalist production itself. Many workers enjoyed a relative easing of capitalist discipline in production during the war. They do not wish to return to the old degrading subordination to the tyranny of the machine. They do not want mere full employment. They want employment as truly social beings, good pay and civilized conditions. In their innermost depths they resent being used as a mere commodity, and after four years of labor as the heroes of the home front for the great "democratic" war against fascism, they have no wish to become once more appendages to a machine which merely grinds out profits. The breakdown of discipline in the Detroit factories is well-authenticated not only by bourgeois observers but by the strenuous efforts of the capitalists to make its restoration a bargaining point. (The demands of General Motors, Ford, and Kaiser for the suppression of unauthorized strikes, control over union literature, etc.)

The very fundamentals are here in question. The (comparatively) high standards of general education, the incessant mental stimulus of the highly politicalized world of today, the ceaseless hammering at the workers' minds by the daily press, popular periodicals, films, news-reels, radio commentators, and world-wide broadcasts, popular literature; the social egalitarianism of the U.S.; these accumulating forces, outside the process of production, have now reached a stage in this highly capitalist country, where they are reacting upon the accumulation of misery, automatized labor, and subordination to humiliating restrictions inseparable from the capitalist mode of production. It is in the capital-labor relation itself that in this most capitalized of all countries we must increasingly seek, find and make articulate in the workers the fundamental cause and remedy of their present discontents.

Sharpening their instinctive hostility to the productive system are the political manifestations of the bloody capitalist chaos. Disillusionment, cynicism and resentment at the results of the war are widespread. The naked power politics, the shameful failures and incapacities of the national leaders, their inability to solve one single international problem, the conviction that all the great sacrifices have been in vain, that society is not better but worse off than before - of all this, the great mass of the people are deeply conscious. The death of Roosevelt coinciding with the end of the war, and the confusion in Washington that centers around Truman personifies in the minds of the workers the end of one epoch and the

beginning of a new one. Within recent months there has spread through the American people a conviction that the nation faces a crisis greater than any that it has ever faced and that there is nowhere in sight a leadership capable of resolving it. In the emphasis upon this weakness of national leadership is empirically and subjectively expressed their organic distrust of the capitalist regime. Finally the magnificent powers of the American economy have been demonstrated to American workers above all others because it was American capitalism which unlocked atomic energy. Thus, this discovery has hit the consciousness of the American masses and developed their social and political awareness as no previous invention has ever done. In it all the contradictions of modern society are concentrated. On the one hand, in the industrial perspective opened up by it, in a mechanically minded country, they see the power of the state to organize and the reinforcement of their consciousness of an age of plenty which needs only social organization to be here tomorrow. But equally, to a people internationally conscious as never before, the discovery intensifies every international problem. Totally destructive war, which to them (in contrast with the European masses) was always remote, is now brought sharply home to them as catastrophic possibility. The American proletariat, with no consciousness of ruin or defeat, and knowing the power of the economy, now hates the monopolistic cliques and will welcome the most drastic revolutionary changes in American society, carried out at the expense of private property. It is necessary to repeat again and again Trotsky's statement that the workers is not a bookkeeper and when he says, open the books, he means first to control the industry and then direct it, i.e., socialism.

Not only the numbers of workers on strike but the course of the strikes themselves following upon the UAW-GM strike have increasingly shown how feverish and explosive is the general social situation. The transit workers in New York threatened a strike to maintain municipal ownership of the power plants. The National Maritime Union conducted a strike to bring the soldiers home. The meat packing workers declared their desire to work for the independent meat-packers but not for the monopolists. Small groups of workers, - tug-boat workers, transit workers, utility workers, elevator operators - have demonstrated before the entire American people, and not always without consciousness, the capacity of the proletariat to paralyze the whole bourgeois economy. The general strike - the unification of working class actions in the interests of the class as a whole - has occurred in a number of cities and been threatened in others. Four times in less than as many months the great city of New York has faced partial or complete shut-down. Only vigorous action by labor bureaucrats checked sympathy strikes with their implications of a national walk-out.

Organized Labor and the Middle Classes

The high stage of social and political development in the

U.S. compelled both sides to pose the wage issue in terms of class struggle on a national scale. The nationwide publicity and counter-publicity of the workers and bourgeoisie were not aimed at convincing each other. They represented the battle for the middle classes and unorganized labor. As the strikes developed it became clear from the actions of the middle classes that labor had won, if not an overwhelming, at least a decisive victory. Large sections of the middle classes, and on occasions a whole town, were mobilized to help labor in its war upon capital. In the cities, the "vigilante" groups were conspicuously absent. The universal solidarity of the worker-veterans with the strikers was a blow to the hopes and aspirations of the bourgeoisie.

In order to be able to educate the workers, the Party must recognize that these strikes objectively represent the total mobilization of all classes in the country for the irrepressible conflict of these "years of decision." The revolution sometimes needs the whip of the counter-revolution, and capitalism has declared its incapacity to live half slave and half free. When all the circumstances are taken into consideration, it is clear that these strikes represent a social protest, a political demonstration and a challenge to the bourgeoisie, against the contradictions between the growth of the productive forces and the actual social relations. Concretely they represent a solemn warning not only to the bourgeoisie but to the revolutionary party, a warning which it will neglect at its peril. In the existing social tension, organized labor has dramatically brought before the nation its desire for a new social order, a demonstration of its power and capacity to pull to itself intermediate classes. It has sown confusion in the ranks of the capitalists and exposed the vacillation and incompetence of the executive committee of the bourgeoisie as embodied in Truman and his entourage. There will be periods of stagnation and even retreat. It is impossible to predict such things. But the whole ideological struggle in the United States has been lifted to a new level, of inestimable importance for the revolutionary party, striving to build itself into a mass organization.

The Ideological Foundation of the Building of the Party

To be able to mobilize itself for its tasks, the party must have as the organic foundation of its thought the great lessons of Marxism, applied to the revolutionary perspectives in the United States, the validity of which has been demonstrated by the American proletariat during the last ten years of its existence. The consciousness of every Party member in the United States must be dominated by the following conceptions:

- (a) the "drive of the proletariat to reconstruct society on communist beginnings" is more instinctive and elemental in

the American proletariat than in any other precisely because of the advanced stage of capitalist production. These tendencies are "organic", i.e., are of the very nature of the organism and are implanted there not by Marxist parties or independent labor parties but by capital itself.

(b) The whole character of our epoch, the epoch of crises and wars make these "organic tendencies in the psychology of workers spring to life with the utmost rapidity."

(c) The American working class has shown its approach to maturity in the organization of the great strikes but has not yet shown the depth and range of its power even on the purely industrial field. The worst-paid, the poorest layers of the oppressed have not yet moved into mass action, but this recent tremendous demonstration of labor's power in the nation cannot pass unnoticed by them. On another occasion they will enter. Each new addition to a strike wave is not a mere addition to numbers but brings into sudden and violent life the socialistic instincts of the masses implanted there by capital." The entire past experience of the working class, the history of its exploitation, miseries, struggles and defeats, comes to life under the impact of events and rises up in the consciousness of every proletarian, even the most backward, and drives him into the common ranks." (Trotsky)

This is the next stage that faces the American workers.

(d) The method of mobilizing these workers is the factory committee. "The prime significance of the committee lies in the fact that it becomes the militant staff for such working class layers as the trade union is incapable of moving into action. It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come." (Founding Conference, p. 23)

(e) The obstacle in the path of these developments is the counter-revolutionary labor leadership.

(f) The great task of the revolutionary party at this stage of its existence and at this stage of the development of the American proletariat is to take these ideas to the vanguard of the working class at the point of production. Thus the Party draws to itself the most advanced elements and prepares the others to accept the leadership of the Fourth International for the proletarian revolution.

These are the conditions from which must be worked out a strategic line for the next period.

Part II

The Strategic Orientation of the Workers Party in the Next Period

Owing to the world-wide phenomenon of statification of production, all economic struggle today tends to become involved immediately with the state, i.e., to become political in the deepest sense of that term. In the face of the pressure of the masses the bourgeoisie makes innumerable legislative proposals, (Smith-Connally, fact-finding, etc.) which for the most part end in impotence. The responsibility and power of the bourgeoisie in dealing with labor is thrust into the hands of the chief executive, thus constituting in essence the elements of the Bonapartist regime.

But the process is not one-sided.

Every important strike by the workers against an individual capitalist or corporation today has hanging over it the intervention of the government on the side of the capitalist class. Unification of bourgeois power draws in its wake unification of proletarian struggle. The immediate period now opening therefore has as its ultimate stage the recognition by the workers of the necessity for organized action as a class against the bourgeois state for the achievement of economic ends. The whole course of development indicates that the political break with the Democratic Party will either directly or indirectly be closely associated with the government's incapacity to satisfy or sponsor labor's economic demands. In the U.S. precisely because of the absence of a political party of labor, the general strategic orientation of the Workers Party as a political organization must be based on the economic struggles of the American workers which, owing to the statification of production, continually tend to telescope the corresponding political and social development.

The Party therefore must henceforth make its main propagandistic orientation the propaganda for unified action by the working classes as a whole, directed against the government for the achievement of its economic as well as its social and political demands.

The Party does not anarchistically, recklessly and adventuristically raise slogans for a general strike. It points out to the workers, however, the inevitability of the widening of the present scissors between wages and prices and the incapacity of the dishonest, bungling government to solve the problem. It points out that whereas in 1936 and again in 1945-46, the government was compelled to pretend to maintain a balance between capital and workers, it is absolutely impossible for it to continue to maintain that position in the future. The Party points out that only the unified actions

of the decisive sections of the workers on a national scale can mobilize the full power of the proletariat and all its allies against the bourgeoisie and the deceptive role that has hitherto been played by the state, its executive committee. The Party points out to the working class that such unified action can range from a nation-wide stoppage of a few hours to a sit-down on a national scale. It warns the workers that a general strike which is something more than a token demonstration against the government can pose immediately the problem of power in the nation, forcing upon the workers either preparation for the social revolution or a demoralizing and disastrous retreat. Without hysteria, by basing this propaganda upon its analysis of the next stage which faces the American working class, the Party not only attracts to itself those far-seeing workers who instinctively draw this conclusion. It lays a basis for its future development in the minds of those workers who are taught to associate this ultimate stage of the development of the workers struggle with the Party of the Fourth International.

With that conviction which can come only from thoroughly understood theory and confidence in the inevitability of socialism, the Party does not wait until the workers have acted and then proceed belatedly to explain the event. It boldly takes the lead, and proclaims the next stage. When this unified action will take place, how and under what circumstances it is impossible to foretell and ridiculous to ask. To wait to see before propagandizing is to fulfill the role not of a vanguard, but of a rear guard.

The Struggle Against the Labor Bureaucracy

Such an orientation, however, demands a clear recognition of the role of the labor bureaucrats as agents of capital in the stratified production. The Party must therefore propagandize in close coordination with the idea of unified action on a national scale the idea of factory committees. These, as the 1935 CIO strikes showed, are likely to spring out of the situation with startling suddenness and power. The workers must be warned that any serious action on a national scale which is not jealously overlooked and safeguarded by factory committees or other rank and file organizations is doomed to disastrous failure. It is by means of the factory committees that the workers can be prepared to take the concrete steps vigilantly to supervise the sabotaging bureaucracy and in time to overthrow it.

Economic Struggles and the Slogan of the Labor Party

It is in the propaganda for unified action on a national scale and the self-mobilization of the masses that the Party will find its deepest basis for propaganda and agitation for a Labor Party; not, however, for a Labor Party in general but a Labor Party which aims at the rule of the workers and

the reconstruction of society. For the American workers, politics is in a very literal sense concentrated economics. In contrast to its brothers in the great countries of Europe, the modern American proletariat has not had to struggle for universal suffrage or against feudal, military or any kind of authoritarian reaction. Its conception of politics is therefore more closely related to its strictly economic demands than that of any other proletariat. This tendency, characteristic of our age, is especially characteristic of the United States. (CIO and NLRB).

It is the function of the Party to draw together as closely as possible the economic and political struggles of the American working class. To leave room for the impression that economic struggles take place on the picket line while political struggles take place in Washington, is to assist the labor bureaucracy in its calculated miseducation of the American workers today. The Party's special function is to tear away the illusions of the workers that the Independent Labor Party is merely a working class edition of the Republican or Democratic Party. The Party propagandizes among the advanced workers for the factory committees, workers committees and farmers committees as independent militant organizations most suitable for the problems of mass struggle in bourgeois society in this epoch. Its own propaganda for the Independent Labor Party is addressed to these advanced workers. The revolutionary character of the Labor Party slogan does not lie in attaching to it slogans for a Workers Government, and nationalization. It lies in the fact that the Party attaches the slogan of the Independent Labor Party to the struggle for the self-mobilization of the workers against the capitalist class and the labor lieutenants of capital. Thus, while the Party will participate concretely even in the organization of a reformist Labor Party, the advanced workers must be constantly made aware of the special significance which the Party gives to its own propaganda for an Independent Labor Party.

In its propaganda for the Labor Party, the Workers Party does not subordinate propaganda for the Workers Party and the Fourth International. In its revolutionary use of the slogan of the Independent Labor Party, the Workers Party finds the arena in which it can make propaganda for the revolutionary party itself. The Workers Party does not call the Labor Party a revolutionary Labor Party, but it declares uncompromisingly that its aim is to oppose those labor bureaucrats and centrists who wish to make of the Labor Party a reformist party.

Capital - Its Labor Lieutenants and the Labor Party

Despite the antagonism to the capitalist regime manifested in the strike wave, American capital continues to hold political sway. The cause of this lies overwhelmingly at

the door of capital's lieutenants. The combination of Labor, City bosses and Southern plantocracy which formed the Democratic Party of the New Deal had undergone a rapid development, so that by 1944, labor and the PAC were incomparably its most powerful section. Yet the labor lieutenants of capital are terrified at the idea of breaking with the bourgeoisie and forming even a reformist independent party of labor. Such is the social and political tension in the country today underlying the old bourgeois forms that the slogan of the transformation of the PAC into an Independent Labor Party holds before the labor bureaucrats the terrifying prospect of facing the problems of the country without the assistance of the bourgeoisie. The fate of the Democratic Party is now in the hands of the labor leaders who can consign it to oblivion at any time they please. Timidity and servility on their part is now the main, if not the only hope, of the Truman government to maintain its ascendancy. The Republican Party's only hope of success is mass disgust with the Democratic Party, or the opportunity which might be presented by a split between the Democratic Party and labor. So often does the appearance of things contradict their essence. Behind the facade of power, the fate of both these bourgeois parties is no longer under their own control but dependent upon the actions of the workers and the men who lead organized labor. Close following of the developments in these parties is necessary and has its place, but the duty of the Party is to make clear to the masses the reactionary sabotage of their power by the labor lieutenants of capital. The Party must point out that they are compelled to play this role precisely because they are supporters of capitalist society and enemies of the proletarian revolution for socialism. In the concrete circumstances of the United States, as explained above, propaganda against the labor lieutenants of capitalism can only be effective if based upon propaganda for the social revolution and the overturn of the production relations of capitalism.

It is by this means also that the Party can best counteract the pseudo-anti-capitalism by which the Stalinists today seek to mobilize on their own behalf the radicalism of the American masses.

The Theory of Combined Development and American Politics

The concrete development of the strategic offensive which must guide the Party in the next period depends on many unpredictable factors. But the strategic analysis of political development in the U.S. bears a striking analogy to the theory of the permanent revolution as applied to social development in Russia. The continual sharpening of class relations, the terrible crisis of capitalism, every day makes it more and more probable that just as the backwardness of Russia made the bourgeois-democratic revolution impossible of complete reali-

zation except as a stage on the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat, so the organization and functioning of any kind of mass Labor Party will be the first stage of the unconcealed revolutionary crisis. This does not, as the academicians would have us believe, make the Labor Party Slogan less necessary but more so.

In 1938 Trotsky warned of an immediate Fascist reaction to the formation of an Independent Labor Party. Since that time the Democratic Party has exhausted all fundamental means of any serious solution to the question of full employment and all that this implies in the minds of the workers. The Roosevelt Government actually committed itself at the last election to finding 60 million jobs. Whatever follies may be in the heads of even the most advanced labor bureaucrats, in the minds of the masses the program of any kind of Labor Party will therefore have to begin where the Democratic Party left off and failed. The national expectations will be reinforced by the universal trend to nationalization of the means of production. It is inconceivable that the American bourgeoisie will allow such a movement to develop and democratically allow any kind of Labor Government or coalition to tamper further with the foundations of capitalist society. Thus, the situation in 1946 makes infinitely more urgent the strategic offensive first proposed in 1938.

The Middle Classes and Combined Development

In 1938 the response to Father Coughlin's propaganda for a new social order by violent methods showed the readiness of the American petty bourgeoisie for drastic solutions to the crisis of democracy. The power of Fascism on an international scale strengthened the appeal of the local Fascists.

Today the defeat of Fascism in World War II and the power of the American proletariat as demonstrated in the wave of strikes have pulled the petty-bourgeoisie, the Negroes and social organizations such as the veterans over to the side of the proletariat. The strategic initiative is now on the side of the proletariat. Though Fascism is now on the defensive, the proletariat can only continue to maintain its present advantageous position by resolute progress toward social revolution.

The Party in its propaganda therefore teaches to the proletariat the importance of establishing, not only in empirical practice but in its own agitation and propaganda, its role as the leader of the nation against the incipient counter-revolution and for the reconstruction of American society.

The Party in order to facilitate this task in the coming period performs its propagandistic function by the preparation and publication of the following:

a) a program of transitional demands concerning the farmers and urban petty-bourgeoisie, worked out with all possible concreteness so as to teach the advanced workers to give clear and concrete answers to the questions put by their future allies. (Founding Conference, p. 29)

b) the role of United States imperialism in the colonies which are under its special domination. (Porto Rico, Philippines, Hawaii, Virgin Islands),

c) the militarization of American imperialism and its consequences for the American working class with special emphasis on the role of the veterans.

The Application of the Strategic Line

The Party must have a strategic orientation before it can apply it. However, the strategic orientation, while it governs the concrete actions of the Party, cannot be a substitute for the actual application. The Party does not under any circumstances neglect to bring before the workers in their unions the transitional program or such sections of the transitional program as may be suitable for their adoption for formal vote. The Party does not neglect any organizational manifestation toward the formation of an Independent Labor Party, however reformist this may be in character, or whatever the means or methods by which labor bureaucrats of one stamp or another are attempting to organize it. The Party, like every revolutionary party, is flexible in its presentation of its revolutionary propaganda and adapts it in individual instances to the need, or limited possibilities of a particular situation. Thus the Party continues its policy of seeking to turn the PAC into an Independent Labor Party. It does not in any way neglect such opportunities as are presented to it to participate in such groups as represented by the Michigan Commonwealth Federation. It specially avoids seeking in its own name to create organizations of any kind which tend to make the Party a substitute for the self-mobilization of the masses. It recognizes always its own limitations. It recognizes the necessity of flexibility in the presentation of its revolutionary propaganda which can only be carried on in the closest relation to the moods and sentiments of the masses in a concrete situation.

The Party does not predict the concrete forms which revolution will take. The Party does not expect nor does it teach that the masses arrive at revolution without set-backs and periods of retreat. The Party adapts its line to changing conditions. But in this epoch it represents itself as an organization which, while remaining in the closest contact with the masses in any existing situation, has as its special function the unveiling of the revolutionary significance of the actions of the proletariat and the propaganda for the corresponding action leading to the social revolution.

(Program to follow)

Part III

Five Years of the Fourth International in the United States

Five Years of the Workers Party

The retrogressive concept of the proletariat has had its effects upon the Workers Party not only on the international but also on the national scene.

Trotsky also warned unceasingly against a besetting danger of an American party. "What is difficult in a young party in the very thick atmosphere of previous traditions, hypocrisy, is to launch a revolutionary slogan. 'It is fantastic,' Not adequate in America." There were "two dangers: the elaboration of the program - sectarian abstraction and opportunism, to lose the general revolutionary line. In the United States the second danger is the more immediate."

The Workers Party general orientation, reenforced by the retrogressive theory, has been consistently in the second direction. The most complete, the most overwhelming condemnation of the Party line is the following. Instead of being the central axis of Party thought, life and activity, the concept of the proletarian revolution has almost disappeared from the propaganda and agitation of the Party. The absence of this conception has resulted in a situation in which the effect of the Party's work upon the masses is that of a left-trade union organization with a socialist coloration.

Slogans for an Independent Labor Party and a Workers Government are not in themselves revolutionary slogans. They are revolutionary only when used as part of the systematic mobilization of the masses for the proletarian revolution. If the slogans are not infused with a revolutionary content, they must of necessity sow parliamentary and reformist illusions in the minds of the workers who are driven to think of the Labor Party and the Workers Government in terms of organization by union bureaucrats, elections and parliamentarism.

The Workers Party has always vigilantly observed the class line and is merciless on all class-collaborationist tendencies. But its retrogressive concept of the American proletariat makes its socialist propaganda approximate to the pre-1914 propaganda of the Mensheviks which called much more boldly than the Workers Party for complete socialism and yet remained essentially reformist.

Failing to instill the masses with the ideas and methods of social revolution, the Party propagandistic pamphlets - Plenty for All, Socialism, the Hope of Humanity, The Fight Against Jim Crow, lack revolutionary content.

The slogan of Workers Control of Production is nowhere

consistently explained and developed concretely in relation to the revolutionary instincts and potentialities of the proletariat. As a result, it is used abstractly, effective chiefly as a theoretical safeguard in the minds of the Party members against the totalitarian dangers of nationalization. Particularly is this absence of the revolution noticeable in the specifically labor propaganda and agitation of the Party which are governed by the idea that the American proletariat (1945) is ready only for New Dealism and not for socialism. This ruinously false conception acts like a dead weight upon the Party in its efforts to grasp the socialistic significance of the actions of the American proletariat. It finds its most perfect expression in the perspectives for a new trade union program in which is unrecognizable Trotsky's revolutionary conceptions of the transitional program or of the Labor Party in relation to it.

The Party is sincerely devoted to the ideals of Socialism and the proletarian revolution and is animated by hatred of bourgeois society. But lacking the correct theoretical approach, and unable to analyze the movement of the proletariat, Labor Action falls back on the only alternative. Unable to appeal to the revolutionary instincts of the workers, it dissipates its revolutionary energy in attempts to stimulate the combativity of the workers by wearisome repetition of the large profits and the criminal conduct and deceptions of the bourgeoisie. Thus it bases itself on the negative aspects of the class struggle.

The Party, expressing the retrogressive concept of the proletariat, fails to analyze for the American workers the concrete indications by which they strive to fulfill the task imposed upon them by history. It fails to enlighten the working class as to the positive socialist implications of its actions and the negative significance of the perplexity, confusion and vacillations of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the Party propaganda fails entirely to convey the indispensable sense of proletarian growth and proletarian development. Far from being able to prepare itself and the advanced workers for great events the Party is constantly astonished by the actions of the workers, and therefore tail-ends every major development (GM-UAW strikes).

Dominating the life and activity of the Party in relation to the American proletariat is the false and retrogressive conception of the Labor Party slogan. The Labor Party slogan has lost its main significance of enabling the Party to enter into mass workers movements to direct them toward the social revolution. It has now become in effect an end in itself, the end of building a constitutional parliamentary Labor Party as the first necessary stage in the development of the American proletariat before it can be considered ready for revolutionary propaganda.

Limited by its conception of the Independent Labor Party as the next stage, the Party's socialist propaganda consists in polemical articles about the advantages of socialism, the weaknesses of arguments against it, and not the inevitability and urgency of revolution.

A Menshevik Anal.

It is an urgent task of the Party to root out this false mode of thought. The traditions of our movement have given us a never-to-be forgotten examples of the contrast between the Bolshevik and Menshevik methods of analysis of the proletariat in a given country and the consequences which follow from each. Lenin and Trotsky, despite their differences, in pre-1905 Russia analysed the Russian proletariat in terms of the stages of development of capitalist production. By this, and by this alone, were they able to recognize that the Russian proletariat, despite the absence of experience in bourgeois parliamentary democracy, was being trained for life and death struggle with the Russian bourgeoisie. By this and by this alone, they were able to educate the vanguard and to train the proletariat to be ready for the concrete tasks which faced it.

The Mensheviks, on the other hand, in bitter hostility to Lenin, analyzed the proletariat not in terms of capitalist production but in terms of its lack of experience of bourgeois democracy. They posed the proletariat's participation in bourgeois democratic politics as "the next stage" and as "the arena" in which the proletariat would struggle for socialism. This led to the idealization of bourgeois democracy and relinquishment of leadership to the radical bourgeoisie, (despite hostile criticism of it).

The Workers Party majority does not advocate or practice in any way the class collaboration in which was the political result of Menshevik thinking. But within the confines of the program of the Fourth International, it adopts the Menshevik mode of thought and analysis of the American proletariat. The Workers Party today analyses the American proletariat in terms of the presence or absence of an Independent Labor Party, and not in relation to the American proletariat and the stratification of production reached by American capitalism. This leads to idealization of the Independent Labor Party as "the next stage" and the "arena" in which the revolutionary party will struggle for socialism. In the specific needs and circumstances of the American proletariat today, the Party has departed from the Bolshevik conceptions of Trotsky on the Labor Party to the retrogressive, that is to say, the Menshevik conceptions of the Labor Party.

Sections of the Party, unable to reconcile themselves to the opportunist practices which result from this conception of the Labor Party, refused to accept it. In an alternative. Thus they were separated from the propaganda circle consisting of the Labor Party not in

of the Labor Party slogan, refuse to accept the slogan altogether. Thus they fall prey essentially to the propaganda circle conception. This thinks of the Labor Party not in terms of propaganda for revolutionary action among the masses, but in relation to arguments with intellectuals and highly educated workers for whom the Labor Party is always seen in reference to the historical betrayals and failures of the Social-Democratic parties in Europe. Thus, on its central slogan of the day, the Party varies between opportunism or sectarian abstraction.

Five Years of the Socialist Workers Party

The Socialist Workers Party has had one inestimable advantage over the Workers Party in that in general, and in particular in its treatment of international news, it shows not the faintest trace of retrogression and places itself before the American working class as the Trotskyist party of the socialist revolution at home and abroad. Not only in relation to Europe but in relation to the United States the SWP propaganda is in the full Trotskyist tradition in that it is conscious always of the challenge to the bourgeois order contained in the aggressive actions of the proletariat. The SWP constantly makes the American workers aware of the coming social revolution in the United States.

Nevertheless, the revolutionary propaganda of the SWP remains sectarian and abstract, and is not applied to concrete political-economic developments in the United States. In its treatment of the concrete situation it cannot rise above the limitations of the trade union struggle. Its treatment of the Labor Party slogan is even more opportunist than that of the WP. In its 1944 resolution on the American question, it makes no reference to statification, the basic characteristic and strategic key to American production relations today.

Hence, not only in the deficiencies of its trade union policy during the war, but in its propaganda and agitation, the SWP has shown a theoretical and practical incapacity to rise to the heights of the tasks demanded by the present upheaval of the American masses. The SWP has failed to overcome the danger of living in the thick conservative traditional atmosphere of the United States.

Thus in their varying degrees, the Fourth International parties in the United States have not given to the American proletariat at the beginning of the post-war period that revolutionary leadership which the present situation and its perspectives demand.

Both parties, (and this includes all majorities and minorities as well), in the period preceding the strikes failed to

prepare the American working class by adequate treatment of the slogan left to us by Trotsky, viz., open the books.

General Motors, the vanguard of the bourgeoisie, seized the opportunity in national advertisements to pose the struggle as inherently a struggle between capitalism and socialism, (not missing the opportunity to misrepresent socialism as regimentation).

Both parties, on the other hand, failed from the very beginning of the strike to pose the struggle in the same way from the point of view of the revolution.

General Motors perceived, beneath the untheoretical but merciless attack upon them of the trade union press the revolutionary socialistic instincts of the masses and their instinctive desire to initiate the reconstruction of society on communist beginnings.

Both parties, on the other hand, failed to recognize the revolutionary significance of the same phenomena and to pose it prominently in terms of social revolution.

General Motors recognized the significance for the counter-revolution of the trade union bureaucracy and insisted on using it in the attempt to discipline the workers and suppress unauthorized stoppages.

Both parties, on the other hand, failed to emphasize in the wildcat strikes symptomatic evidence of the workers seeking to blast a way onto the road of direct action away from the counter-revolutionary leadership of the trade union bureaucracy.

Thus, General Motors fought the immediate demands of the workers but carried on vigorous propaganda for bourgeois society against the socialist revolution. Both parties of the Fourth International in the United States failed to respond for the social revolution on behalf of the socialist proletariat.

Both parties failed to apply the Transitional Program in a revolutionary manner. Only after a long period did they timidly suggest the idea of a general strike in a propagandistic manner although the whole situation was crying for it. They failed to combine the Bolshevik strategy of complete identification with the concrete needs of the masses, while at the same time maintaining a sharp, critical, distrustful, not to say, hostile attitude to the whole trade union leadership. Unable to recognize their task as that of revolutionary propaganda, they failed to make the main task the propaganda for the mobilization of the workers in their rank and file committees as a safeguard against the inevitable treachery and

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vacillations of the trade union leadership. They failed to use the opportunity to make a bold and vigorous propaganda for the organization of workers defense guards, even after the brutal beatings of the workers by the police (Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, etc.). Conscious of their inability actually to lead the necessary revolutionary action, they failed to perform their specific function at this stage - propaganda for such action.

Both parties failed, therefore, to oppose the counter-revolutionary propaganda of General Motors with the revolutionary propaganda of the Transitional Program.

The Socialist Workers Party was driven to combine its opportunism on the trade union question with historical articles on American Soviets in Seattle a quarter of a century ago. The Workers Party revolutionary propaganda consisted of lengthy arguments as to the theoretical confusion and deficiencies of the trade union bureaucrats. Instead of the propaganda for rank and file committees of the workers to mobilize them against the vacillations and treacheries of the trade union bureaucracy, the Workers Party reiterated in abstract terms the need for an Independent Labor Party and a Workers Government.

This conspicuous failure imposes upon all sections of both parties scrupulous re-examination of the past in order to meet the challenge of the future.

Unity

The nature of the coming struggles and the difficulties and opportunities that face both the American proletariat and the revolutionary party in the United States demand the unity of the two groups which on an international and national scale stand on the principles of the Fourth International.

The division between the two organizations is a cause of scandal for the Fourth International in the United States, confuses the proletariat, and diverts the energy and attention of the membership.

Unity is needed so that the Fourth International may take advantage of the possible formation of an Independent Labor Party. Experience in Europe has proved to the Trotskyite movement the difficulty of persuading workers of the organizational conclusions of Bolshevism unless the revolutionary party is of sufficient force to attract them. Experience has also proved the necessity of a strong Bolshevik organization to resist the attractive power of a mass Labor Party.

In a few months the two organizations will be publishing between them the equivalent of a four page daily paper in the United States. Around the organization of such a tremendous

weapon of the class struggle, there is the possibility of rapidly creating a political organization which will stamp itself upon the consciousness of the United States as a serious contender for leadership of the revolutionary proletariat.

The greatest obstacle in the path of the development of the Fourth International in the United States is Stalinism. The greatest blow the Trotskyist movement in the United States can deal the Stalinists is the formation of a united organization. There is emerging in the United States a general tendency toward revolution which is at the same time hostile to Stalinism. The Fourth International in the United States cannot organize, develop and expand this tendency as long as it is divided into two groups. The new line of the Stalinists and the difficulties which it creates for the Fourth International are doubled and quadrupled by the division between the two organizations.

Both the leadership of the Workers Party and the Socialist Workers Party pose the question of unity in organizational terms, whereby they once again demonstrate their imperfect grasp of the radicalization of the American proletariat and the lagging behind of the revolutionary organization. The Socialist Workers Party, in particular, by viewing such successes as it may gain in relation to the Workers Party and not in relation to the needs of the proletariat, betrays a criminal and sectarian blindness. The unprincipled maneuvers of the Socialist Workers Party in regard to the question of unity betrays the sectarian factionalism of the old propagandist circle and its incapacity to understand the needs of the American proletariat today.

The only serious barrier to unity, the problem of the harmonious functioning of two organizations with different political views, is in the last analysis to be solved by the proletariat. Both organizations recognize in theory and practice that the success of the Fourth International is rooted in the maintenance of closest contact with the proletariat. The safeguard for the maintenance of unity against irresponsible factionalism in both parties is the growth of the revolutionary party in correspondence with the opportunities and responsibilities which will be presented to it by the march of the American proletariat toward the social revolution.

In its readiness to sacrifice its independence and subordinate its political line to the majority in a unified organization, the WP shows the genuineness of its claims to leadership of the American proletariat. Under the circumstances, however, its first task is to build itself a mass basis in the American proletarian vanguard. But at the same time, it will miss no legitimate opportunity to pose before the Fourth International in the United States and the American proletariat the objective necessity for unity and the reactionary role played by those who stand in its way.

February 25, 1946.

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ADDENDUM TO JOHNSON RESOLUTION ON U.S.

In the WP the tendency led by Temple is opposed to the use of the Labor Party slogan. Yet this tendency bases itself on the conception of the transitional program as a means of the mobilization of the masses for proletarian revolution. The program of this tendency is based not on political conjunctures or the thought or mood of the masses but on the objective situation as it is represented in the social crisis and the revolutionary actions and organizations required for the mobilization of the masses.

In its resolution it proposes:

a) that the main line of the party in putting forward the transitional program should be the posing before the workers the necessity of depending on their own extra-parliamentary strength and organizations, shop committees, councils of workers and farmers, workers defense guards, workers militia, etc. The strategic orientation for these extra-parliamentary organizations as the crisis matures is the formation of soviets.

b) By its propagation of this line the party will^{best}/be able to counteract the class collaborationist leadership of the Stalinists and liberals.

c) that the party advance revolutionary propaganda of this kind to its own cadres and the ranks of advanced workers in this present brief interlude before the real deep-going post-war social crisis.

In proposing this strategic orientation for the party in this period, Comrade Temple puts forward with no essential difference whatever the strategic line of the Johnson minority in this resolution. Insofar as it differentiates itself from the Johnson minority it holds the patently false position that today in the United States (May 1946) the post-war social crisis has not arrived.

The party rejects the conclusion of the Temple and Russell resolution that the use of the Labor Party slogan is opposed to the revolutionary education and organization of the American workers.

The party condemns the political confusion thrown into the party by these comrades who recognize that the present use of the slogan by the party leads to the sowing of constitutional and parliamentary illusions, who propose a strategic orientation in harmony with the line of the Johnson minority, and yet, find themselves able to support the majority resolution which is uncompromisingly opposed to the strategic line of the Johnson minority.

J. R. Johnson