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MANIFESTO OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL ON FRANCE

The Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, addressed itself to the workers last May with a Manifesto in which it explained the causes of the war and indicated the tasks facing the working class in this catastrophe.

Since then the military fall of France has occurred and the French bourgeoisie has abandoned the camp of the "democracies" to collaborate with Hitler in the "reconstruction" of Europe. In the face of these events, the Fourth International can say with confidence that the facts have confirmed its analysis of the present capitalist war, have justified its criticism of the traitorous leaders of the working class, have given a new force to our program of socialist revolution.

The Causes of the French Defeat

The military downfall of France is not a "technical" accident, but the clearest expression of the atrophy of bourgeois democracy in France. The whole strategy of the French general staff consisted of passivity and waiting. Its plan of war was to gain time (in reality, to lose it), reclining blindly confident behind the Maginot line, the gigantic extension of the 1914-1918 trench system.

On the diplomatic field the policy of waiting and of retreat culminated in the inability of France to draw into its orbit and prepare a common system of defense, with little Belgium, her ally in the First World War.

After the defeat, the world learned about the internal struggles within the French government, especially between Daladier and Reynaud -- a very clear symptom of the decline of democracy, powerless even to produce a new Clemenceau and paralyzed by Byzantine quarrels.

The conduct of the French bourgeoisie and its general staff after the Germans broke through at Sedan confirms to the hilt our analysis, in our Manifesto in May, when we declared: "The bourgeoisie never defends the fatherland for the sake of the fatherland. They defend private property, privileges, profits. Whenever these sacred values are threatened, the bourgeoisie immediately takes to the road of defeatism. . . In order to save their capital, the Spanish bourgeoisie turned to Mussolini and Hitler for military aid against their own people. The Norwegian bourgeoisie aided Hitler's invasion of Norway. Thus it was and always will be."

After the German break-through in the North, the military situation was by no means hopeless, had the French bourgeoisie and its general staff been willing to mobilize all the resources of the country. But the general staff and the bourgeoisie felt, as General Woywand explicitly said, that such a situation would be like that of Russia in 1917. "It must not come to that," said Woywand. Rather than leave open the possibility of the French proletariat coming to power and conducting a revolutionary war against Hitler, the French ruling class preferred to capitulate to Hitler.

The curve of French imperialism has been steadily declining since the "victory" of 1918. Its status in Europe and in the world as a result of the Versailles Treaty was extremely disproportionate to its real economic strength. It could provide its political vassals in Europe (the little Entente, the Balkan states) with financial aid but was incapable of making them customers for her industry, which could not compete successfully with Germany, England or the United States. The handling of the tremendous French colonial empire was also beyond the power of the industrial apparatus of the metropolis. The French bourgeoisie submitted the colonies to an exploitation that was ferocious but yet netted relatively little, for it was extremely backward in its economic methods.

Before the war of 1914-1918, the development of French capitalism was markedly backward compared to that of Germany and England, not to speak of the United States. The military victory of 1918 could not infuse new life into this relatively backward economy but, on the contrary, engendered many illusions and gave the impression of strength where there was only stagnation and decline.

Those Responsible for the Fascist Advance

The street fighting and demonstrations of February, 1934, signaled the approach of a revolutionary crisis, the polarization of the country into two opposed camps -- Fascist and revolutionary. The decomposition of bourgeois democracy was only the fruit of the general decline of the French empire, accelerated by the great economic crisis. This decay of bourgeois democracy was expressed in the rout of its traditional party, the Radical Socialist Party. In June, 1936, the French proletariat occupied the factories, thus placing the country upon the threshold of a revolutionary situation. The socialist revolution then loomed as the only possible road by which the country could come out of its atrophy. But the movement of the French workers was strangled by the apparatus of its own organizations. The treacherous leaders (Jouhaux, Blum, Thorez) did all they could to keep the workers chained to the chariot of decaying parliamentary democracy, in the name of the defense of the "fatherland" and of "democracy".

The proletarian revolution in France would have opened a new future for the country. A Soviet France would have immediately shaken the Fascist regime, and changed the face of Europe. The defense of the "fatherland" by the leaders of the workers' parties paralyzed the workers in the struggle for their emancipation, but it could not prevent the triumph of Hitler. The defense of bourgeois "democracy" prevented the creation of proletarian Soviet democracy, but could not prevent the appearance of the Bonapartist dictatorship of Pétain. The hollow "anti-Fascism" of the Popular Front thus stifled the proletarian revolution and led to the triumph of Fascism throughout Europe.

If the peoples of Europe have had to enter a new slaughter, if Fascism is pushing its way through the continent, the direct responsibility falls upon the leadership of the official organizations of the proletariat: the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the C.G.T.

(General Confederation of Labor). The Fourth International must explain patiently to the workers the lessons of the last years in the light of recent events, unmask the treacherous role of both the Socialist and Stalinist leaders and win the proletariat to Bolshevism.

The Petain Government

At the time of the fascist insurrection of February 6, 1934, those champions of democracy, Daladier and his friends, found nothing else in their arsenal but flight. In their place there emerged the government of the decrepit Doumergue, ready to replace the parliamentary mechanism by the police and the army.

After the military downfall of last May these valiant defenders of democracy, including Daladier himself, hastened to run like rats into Spain or to Morocco, without ideas, without perspectives, without a program. The swift invasion of the German troops had shattered the administrative system. The only group representing a certain relative solidity were the top ranks of the army. Around them rallied some Anglophobe politicians. This combination was crowned by the octogenarian Petain. The new Bonapartes did not even use cannon against parliament, which decided on its own hook to disappear.

The German army occupied all that part of France which retained some military and economic importance. Hitler then hoped to make a quick end to England. He left to Petain the care of millions of refugees. A French national government, provided it was docile, could decrease the problems of the invasion. Finally, its existence could prevent the immediate passing of the fleet in the colonies into the English camp. The Petain-Laval crew lent itself to docile service in this manoeuvre.

The war aims of France had been the liberation of Czechoslovakia, the defense of Poland, the destruction of Nazism and the reestablishment of a "free" Europe. It was in the name of these democratic and humanitarian undertakings that the bourgeoisie (aided by its agents in the workers' camp) dragged the French workers and peasants into the fields of battle. After the defeat, the bourgeoisie suddenly concluded that it was not worth the trouble to fight for democracy, that democracy was dying throughout the entire world. Laval concluded an agreement with Hitler to participate in the "reconstruction" of Europe. And, as Hitler would not repulse those who fell flat on their bellies before him, a spokesman of the French bourgeoisie spoke of his "incontestable grandeur." Yesterday the French bourgeoisie wanted to free Czechoslovakia, today it does not wish even to free itself. It leaps into the camp of its "hereditary enemy" and is preparing to aid it against its ally of yesterday. From one day to the next the "national" becomes "anti-national" and vice-versa.

Here is a great lesson for the workers of France and the whole world. The bourgeoisie (and its agents in the workers' camp) everywhere and always curbs the struggle of the proletariat for its emancipation in the name of "national" interests. It persecutes revolutionaries for their defeatism and denounces them as agents of the enemy.

The experience of France shows once more that "national" considerations serve only to mask the interests of the bourgeoisie which is always ready to change sides when it is a question of preserving its privileges. Let the workers learn a lesson that the bourgeoisie has once again demonstrated!

The Hitlerian "Peace"

Hitler has not as yet succeeded in invading England. The air force can decide nothing without an advance of armies to occupy territories. But that is not so simple. The war continues and can be protracted. Like a widening spiral, it spreads from continent to continent and tomorrow it will have encircled the earth. The armistice of Rethondes or the "peace" of Petain-Hitler will not protect France from the military vicissitudes of the continuing war.

Laval hopes that England will soon be crushed and he already sees the French bourgeoisie collaborating with Hitler in the "reconstruction of Europe. Even in the case of a German victory, however, it is doubtful that Hitler can "reconstruct" much in Europe and it is still more doubtful whether France can take a great part in this task. Goebbels recently declared to the members of the Hitler youth that after the victory they will remember war as the "golden time." We can believe him. Before the war, European economy had, since the great crisis of 1929, lost all its equilibrium and could find a certain easing of its afflictions only in tremendous armament production. After the war, all the disproportions of a diseased economy will burst into full view, not to speak of national and social struggles. Here is what the "organization of Europe" by Hitler in collaboration with Laval holds out: worse times than the war!

"The Rebirth of Democracy"

The struggle for democracy under the flag of England (and the United States) will not lead to a noticeably different situation. General De Gaulle struggles against "slavery" at the head of colonial governors, that is to say, of slave masters. In his appeals, this "leader" uses, just like Petain, the royal "we." The defense of democracy is in good hands! If England should install De Gaulle in France tomorrow, his regime would not in the least be distinguished from that of the Bonapartist government of Petain.

Churchill recently refused to discuss the regime of Europe after a British victory. He has, in effect, nothing to propose. The imperialist solution imposed in 1919 led to a new catastrophe twenty years later. Neither Hitler nor Churchill can regenerate capitalism. The whole system is in a blind alley.

The Class Struggle Continues

Hitler has reduced Europe to a vast concentration camp of nations. ~~The struggle for the unity of all Germans has been followed by that~~ for the unity of all non-Germans under the Nazi boot. But history is a sure guarantee that there has never been national oppression without national struggles.

The big French bourgeoisie has already succeeded in arriving at an understanding with Hitler: National resistance is concentrated in the poorer sections of the population, the urban petty-bourgeoisie, the peasants, the workers. But it is the latter which give the most resolute character to the struggle and will know how to connect it with the struggle against French capitalism and the Petain government.

The workers begin their national and class tasks with little danger from French fascism. The Petain government, far from being the fascist regime which panic-stricken democrats label it has no mass base underneath it, fascist or otherwise. The fascist organizations can have no serious perspectives of taking over the government with any support. In the eyes of the masses, including the petty-bourgeoisie, the French fascists cannot but appear as agents or friends of the victorious enemy. Thus neither Hitler nor Petain find a secure foundation in French society. It is noteworthy to add that the same phenomenon has occurred in Norway, Holland and Belgium, the other countries where the Nazis have installed friendly governments. An atmosphere of universal hostility weighs down upon the Nazi victor and his collaborators, serving to demoralize them while it creates a favorable atmosphere for arousing the masses to struggle.

With winter, the blockade, and the war in the Mediterranean, food has become and will become more and more scarce. The burden weighs more heavily on the cities than on the countryside, more heavily on the poor than on the rich. That means that the worst sufferers are the industrial workers and the lowest sections of the urban petty-bourgeoisie. The government has no solution to offer other than bureaucratic control of food distribution. But the rich always find means of escaping administrative control. Instead of governmental regulation, there should be substituted control by the people themselves. Each town, each section of the city, ought to have its food control committee which can control prices and will supervise the allotment. The state functionaries are always powerless in the struggle against profiteers and speculators and are often, indeed, their accomplices. Only control by the people can put an end to those who are ready to starve the people in order to keep up profits.

For the workers, especially in the ^{un}occupied territory, the economic disorganization takes the form of unemployment. It splits the ranks of the workers and erodes their class solidarity. Against this pestilence the Bolshevik-Leninists propose the sliding scale of hours of work. The available work should be divided between all the workers in the factories, with a minimum salary.

The cost of living will rise more and more. Tomorrow inflation can arise. Here also it is the workers who will receive the hardest blows. Their struggle for wage increases will be useless if they do not obtain the rising scale of wages.

Facing the economic difficulties and the menace of famine, regulation and control are necessary. The bureaucratic measures taken by the state are useless or simply are turned to the profit of a handful of capitalists and to the detriment of broad sections of the working populations. Petain is prepared to regulate production of different branches of industry, thanks to the economic "dictators" at the head

of each one of them. To this state control, the Bolshevik-Leninists counterpose workers' control by the workers themselves. No one knows better than they the sources of waste and anarchy in production.

To the measures of the Bonapartist dictators imposing everywhere the bourgeois bureaucratic control from above, the workers will impose their control from below, exercised through broad sections of the workers in their capacities as producers and consumers.

After having "regulated" the trade unions with the servile aid of the trade union leaders, the Petain government has now decreed outright dissolution of the C.G.T.U. It is an elementary class duty of the Bolshevik-Leninists to fight shoulder to shoulder with all workers, whatever their political views, against the government's attacks on the unions. At the same time, however, it is necessary to make the workers understand that the reformist trade unions that they have hitherto known are the product of another epoch, that of bourgeois democracy, and that that kind of trade unionism is dragged along with bourgeois democracy in its decline. The trade unions that the French workers will re-establish will be organs of revolutionary class struggle or they will not be re-established at all. In the coming explosive struggles against the German generals or the Bonapartist ministry, the form that the workers' organization is most likely to take is factory committees directly elected by the workers.

A Soviet Union of Europe

The present situation will scarcely last long! Up to now Hitler's successes have been due above all to the weaknesses and decline of the democracies. The real test of the Nazi system has only begun.

To the fascist "reconstruction" of Europe, that is to say, to the perpetuation of misery and ruin, we oppose the Soviet United States of Europe, a free federation of the peoples with a socialized economy in which the profit system will be replaced by the cooperation of the workers.

In the face of oppression and dictatorship, the workers will not abandon the struggle for democratic liberties (freedom of the press, of assembly, etc.) but they must understand that this struggle cannot revive the decaying bourgeois democracy which has engendered this very oppression and dictatorship. The only democracy now possible in Europe is proletarian democracy, the system of soviets, the elected organs of the working people.

The French state of Petain-Laval has superseded the Third Republic of Daladier-Roynaud. That has been buried in the past, and nothing can make it live again. To escape out of slavery, oppression and misery, there is but one road, the establishment of a workers and peasants government.

The Fourth International

In a Europe which is the prey of social and national oppression, revolts are inevitable. But the essential condition for success is the existence of a revolutionary leadership. Recent events in France are the direct condemnation of the entire policy of the official workers' organizations (the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the trade union leadership).

After the defeat, the socialist leaders who called upon the workers to shed their blood to defend bourgeois democracy, rallied in the majority to the Poincaré government, that is to say, collaborated with Hitler. They have demonstrated once more that they are the docile agents of the bourgeoisie.

The shift by Stalin from one camp to another on the eve of the war disclosed what was the reality hidden behind the propaganda of the Communist Party against fascism and for the defense of democracy: this propaganda had the sole aim of assuring Stalin of the aid of French regiments without the least regard for the revolutionary interests of the French workers. Since Stalin's diplomatic change of front, the Comintern has replaced "the struggle against Fascism" with denunciations of the imperialists, above all, the British and French. But the basis of the Comintern's policy remains the same: the subordination of the revolutionary struggle to the interests of the Stalinist oligarchy. In practice, the Stalinist parties now live from day to day on small adventures. In Norway, the Stalinist paper succeeded in maintaining itself for some months under the German occupation, while denouncing English imperialism in the manner of Goebbels. But in the United States, the Communist Party demands the alliance of Moscow and Washington, which is the partner of London. In France, the Stalinists are ready to launch the workers tomorrow into any kind of an adventure that Stalin deems useful to his diplomatic game.

Never forget, workers of France, that the premiership of Blum was not possible without Thorez! The guilt for decapitating the June strikes is shared equally by the Communist Party with the treacherous leaders of the Socialist Party and the trade unions. Today Jouhaux and Blum mean nothing; but their criminal partner of 1936-1938, the Stalinist bureaucracy, can still do terrible damage to the French workers. They constitute today the main danger in the labor movement.

One of the essential tasks of the French Bolshevik-Leninists is to turn toward the duped followers of the agents of Stalin, turn to the Communist workers and to help them draw the lessons from these recent events.

The unprecedented military defeat and downfall of the Third Republic have introduced disquiet and ferment into all the old organizations. Now the torpor provoked by the suddenness of the catastrophe is beginning to be dissipated. Discussions will not be lacking, but neither will confusion. Alone of all the big and little organizations, the Fourth International can confidently say that its program has passed the test of facts. That is why it can boldly present it to everyone. This program is the socialist revolution attained by the methods

of implacable class struggle.

An entire epoch has been left behind, that of decaying bourgeois democracy. It has carried away with it its bourgeois-democratic parties and leaders, as well as the workers' parties and leaders who had bound their fate to it. We have entered into a new epoch, that of the struggles and the convulsions of the death agony of capitalism. But this new epoch is that of the Fourth International and its triumph!

November, 1940

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION

FRANCE

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As is already known to many comrades from the press, our French comrades survived the collapse of France in much better shape than all the other working class organizations. They continue to function under the new conditions. although with considerable difficulty, most of our forces being dispersed as a result of the chaotic conditions brought about by the German invasion. Circumstances make regularity almost impossible and communications come through only rarely. The composition of the leading bodies shifts in accordance with whoever is available and is subject to the vicissitudes of the times.

The latest communication from France to reach us is dated August and was received only in October. From this communication it is apparent that at the time of its writing two comrades, I.C. and M.H., were temporarily in charge of the center, impressing their views upon its activities and documents. Their views naturally color also the document received by us, which is a report. With the political nature of the views expressed therein, the Executive Committee of the International -- although welcoming the news of their safety and of the continued functioning of the organization -- has had to take issue very sharply. Below we bring the Report of I.C. and M.H. as well as the reply of the E.C. Although many hardships and long delay attend the passage of communications from one side to the other, the Fourth International nevertheless manages to make itself felt in the work of the sections. In presenting these documents here, it is intended to keep all comrades informed of the developments in progress, which is in itself a contribution to this work.

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August 7, 1940

Report on France, by M.H. and I.C.

The following notes are a hasty complement to the evaluations and information contained in previous texts and articles. They aim to enable you to evaluate more concretely the development of the situation. Let us specify a number of points right at the beginning:

1) The defeat means concretely the collapse of the economic and administrative apparatus of France. Three forces are contending: German imperialism, the French bourgeoisie, the French proletariat. Whence there arises an extraordinary complexity in the evolution of the situation, complicated by the real power of the forces on the field; German imperialism beginning to get winded, occupied with other tasks; the French bourgeoisie temporarily dispossessed by its own flight, incapable of reestablishing its apparatus of production; the proletariat extremely divided economically, and politically disoriented.

It is important in these conditions rather to point out the essential characteristics of the coming developments than to predict where and when they will come about:

a) This development will be chaotic, with numerous zigzags necessitating each time a new tactic and permitting at each turnabout new alliances;

b) Politically the weakness of our adversaries gives us a great power of penetration: the organization must therefore know how to carry out an audacious policy in all questions, and not to anchor itself in the routinistic "tran-tran" of the past; it must have an extreme organizational mobility, which presupposes an extremely rigid leadership, exercising control at every instant, and therefore full-time;

c) A persevering effort to preserve and reinforce the organization's cadres in a period of systematic reaction and repression.

2) The evolution of the situation in France will be considerably influenced by the evolution of the military operations and their consequences: the disruption of the German army by successful English-resistance or the disruption of world economy which the fall of the "City" of London would bring about, or the eventuality of a conflict between Germany and the USSR -- all these are so many factors which would modify the correlation of forces and the orientation of the three forces on the field.

Articles have defined the general orientation of the French bourgeoisie and the General Staff. There has been emphasized the way in which French political life tends to form itself in accordance with profound analogies with the politics of Balkan countries. There will be here noted what particularly interests the working class.

1) The economic dispersion of the working class: scarcely one-quarter of the workers are actively participating in production. On this basis there is to be observed a differentiation and a constant lowering of working conditions: work with reduced hours per week; work at reduced salary, militarized work, etc. At the same time a growing radicalization is being brought about in the marginal groups (youth, unemployed, war prisoners): it is the struggle for these groups which stands out foremost in French politics: we must on this terrain engage in a time-race with fascism. Similarly we must be the first to bring the solution of the essential problem of the workers how to get the factories going again.

2) The ripening of a revolutionary spirit in the masses: in a general way we are witnessing a political ferment which is extremely confused and extremely active. It tends to develop in two steps, which are however closely interwoven: a) the deep desire of the masses to understand the why-and-wherefore of the recent events, to replace the bankrupt regime by a new regime, a mistrust toward all old formulations; b) a work of political research (literal; perhaps better translated, "tentative regroupings") which goes from bourgeois milieux to working-class milieux, passing through the petty-bourgeoisie, which shows itself by the creation of multiple groups, centres, nuclei, all in search of a national and social programme. In the present state of our forces, it would be well to concentrate on the second aspect, to intervene in all these groups in order to bring them a programme of action and principles.

3) These manifestations are being produced around three essential problems: the problem of responsibilities (for the war and defeat), the national problem, and the problem of bread -- they are all of course intimately interconnected.

a) The defeat has rendered very unpopular bourgeois democracy, capitalism, and the army officers. On this terrain the difficulty of a fascist utilization of the anger of the masses comes specifically from the depth of the masses' reaction and its extremely sharp political character. Particularly among the prisoners there is already noticeable a spontaneous tendency toward soviet democracy;

b) The problem of bread which tends on the one hand to solder together all the poor classes of city populations, and on the other hand to drive a wedge between the city and the country. The bond between the city and the country will be created largely on the political terrain, by the ex-servicemen and the youth;

c) The anti-Hitler movement necessarily has a both national and social character. There can as a matter of fact be noticed (a) a more and more marked hostility on the part of the workers towards the forces of occupation, reinforced by the fact that machinery is being transported into Germany, etc.; (b) a permanent vacillation in the opinion of the petty-bourgeoisie of the cities between economic hostility ("they're eating our butter") and political sympathy ("There are the boys who've brought some order in Franco"); (c) a marked tendency in certain country districts toward sympathy with the occupying troops (the occupation and its resultant purchases of food for sending to Germany have caused a rise in prices for agricultural produce).

In the country districts in the non-occupied zone, on the contrary, where prices have a tendency to go down for lack of marketing facilities, a nationalist movement tends to take root. But one notes the specific fact that the nationalist milieux feel that they cannot really crystallize the movement except on a social basis. These contradictions open broad perspectives to us.

4) Labor Organizations:

a) The Confederation Generale du Travail, already reduced in membership by the war to between 700,000 and 800,000, and made up furthermore almost exclusively of functionaries and statute-workers (railway men, miners, etc.), finds itself in point of fact completely wiped out by the latest events (dispersal of plants, considerable diminution in the number of genuinely employed workers, break with its center (Jouhaux) and its right (Belin), who went into the cabinet). A meeting of its CCN, held discreetly a few days ago, decided to change article I of its statutes (class struggle) and introduce instead a forbiddance to strike. Nevertheless it is probable that the constitution does not intend to set up immediately a constitution of corporations, but on the contrary will allow the syndicates (separate trade-unions composing the CGT) to continue. The latter reduced to their cadres, can develop again only to the extent that they can guarantee work to their members; this is exactly what the Germans are trying to do (production cooperatives, etc.); and it is what we should ourselves try to get into operation -- and through this effort try to get hold of the greatest possible number of leading positions.

b) The Socialist Party has been definitively split by the events. The Paul Faure and Leon Blum tendencies have not only exposed themselves by their attitude toward England, but also toward the Vichy government and Germany. In reality the party tops have no longer any contact at all with the federations, and we are witnessing a falling-to-pieces analogous to that which the German social-democracy underwent: organizational crumbling-away, political disintegration ranging from the extremes of rallying to Hitlerism as far as sympathy toward Bolshevism.

c) The Communist Party is busily engaged in rapidly pulling its apparatus together; already it is expending an enormous activity, tacitly protected by the Germans. The contacts at the top, between the Stalinist leadership and the Kommandantur is certain; the united front with fascist groups gets firmer on each occasion. On this basis, one notes: (a) the influence of Stalinism among the youth as well as in the prison camps is non-existent; (b) their influence among the unemployed is due to an agitation which is enormous but aimless and with no clear perspective; it is incapable, at the present stage, of translating itself into action; (c) the numerical importance of the party, and especially its internal cohesion, have much diminished. Nevertheless, even reduced to an illegal active membership of from 20,000 to 30,000, it remains not only the most important, but indeed the only, working-class party. It influences a zone of former "faithful", now reduced to half, say 200,000; especially in case of developments in the East (morning, I think, not the Far East, but the German

Soviet frontier), it will still play an important role in the situation in France.

d) The PSOP: for some months it has totally ceased to exist. The center (Jacquier), and the Masonic Right had in fact separated and become completely inactive. The reappearance of the centrist leadership, a slight evolution of the freemasons (being unable, despite all their desire to come to an agreement with the Hitlerians, they are now seeking allies on the left) has ended in a rapprochement between the center and the left: but on the basis of their recognizing the non-existence of the PSOP; at the same time the left intends to constitute with us a permanent community of action and doesn't exclude the possibility of building together the revolutionary party.

5) The "Comite pour la IVe Internationale": a document (herewith) briefly describes our positions: let us nevertheless make this clear. The position expressed by the word "pour" (for) in no way conceals a fundamental political divergence with the way of posing the problem of the Fourth International, such as it was defined by the World Conference of 1938. It simply expresses the observation that the practical evolution of our movement has developed in a noticeably different way from what we had foreseen, and that it is important now to work for the practical realization of that foreseen eventuality, by intervening in the various national and international regroupings, while not neglecting to bring about the evolution of the international situation.

Organizationally, what does the "Comite pour la IVe" represent?

Numerically and politically more even than in the case of the old POI, the work of reorganization is still far from being finished. One can say that it represents:

a) the return into the organization of elements which were practically separated from us in the course of various crises:

b) bringing to the new organization the gains won by each of the currents during the war;

c) the definitive inclusion of a fraction of the PSOP. This means, practically, that in the course of the next few weeks we can organize illegally between 700 and 800 militants and spread the organization very rapidly starting with this base.

As a matter of fact, through the war, a rather large number of comrades have acquired positions which makes them centers of influence in different milieux: the work in the Auberges de la Jeunesse has enabled us to take control of the leadership of this numerically and politically most important of the youth organizations (40,000 members); we have means of influencing seriously the trade-union and ex-service movements; we enjoy a certain prestige among illegal organizations, including nationalist organizations. In order to gain all the benefits of this situation, certain things are necessary. We intend to:

a) orient the present activity of the organization towards the creation of solid fractions in different organizations; to give a solid structure to these fractions by the creation (either by these organizations' own means, or by our own means) of a certain number of fulltime functionaries

b) multiply our propagandist activity (frequent publication of material on each specific question);

c) give the organization an extremely flexible system of functioning; but at the same time to guarantee political and organizational coordination and control by an extremely strict functioning of the leadership and the apparatus. Here is the need of fulltime functionaries.

In general, we must get over our mania for agitation-for-our-own-satisfaction, and plunge each militant into a well-defined milieu in which he should work; and to respond to the needs which arise therein by a concrete application of our transitional program.

Within the framework of these remarks, we beg to draw your attention to a few specific points:

1) The urgency for the French organization of being able to find safe asylum for a few comrades in case of a new wave of reaction. Several comrades are living in illegality, which would become very dangerous in such an eventuality. The IS should examine the possibility of enabling four or five comrades to get abroad.

2) In the same way the situation of foreign comrades in France is becoming very precarious. We believe that in the present condition of Europe, the majority of them ought to return to their respective countries. There are, however, a certain number (perhaps about ten) who also should be enabled to find a place of refuge.

3) Getting the apparatus into action requires an immense financial effort. The French organization is poorer than ever before: there are many unemployed, and many comrades whose whereabouts are still unknown. The work undertaken may enable us to develop rapidly if we are not checked at every step by the financial question.

4) The French organization is very anxious that uninterrupted political contacts shall be established between the IS and the Comité pour la IVe. It insists that the correspondence shall not have a solely administrative character, and that it not contain merely more or less disputable evaluations, but that on the contrary it try to create an active political collaboration.

5) The French organization particularly asks to be given detailed information on the situation in the various countries; it very particularly requests that it be informed in an uninterrupted way about the situation in India and Indo-China.

7 August 1940

Report on France, by M.H., consulting with I.C.: Appendix referred to on Page 13.

1) Under the name "Comite pour la IVe Internationale" there have just been regrouped the comrades of the former majority and minority of the P O I, as well as the members of the minority of the P S O P. The Comite pour la IVe Internationale does not pretend, in the present circumstances, to play in France the role of the Revolutionary Party which is historically necessary.

It is by assuming the immediate tasks imposed by the situation, by trying to draw the masses towards the revolutionary solution of the world crisis, that we are pursuing our primary objective: the building of the revolutionary party. We believe that in the course of the future development of the political and economic situation of France there will be produced new regroupings within the French proletariat, which has more and more lost confidence in the Socialist and Communist Parties, which are now completely falling apart. We consider ourselves as the nucleus which should intervene the most actively for the completion of this process of regrouping.

2) The principles of the Fourth International constitute the political basis of our organization. It is that which we have wanted to signalize precisely in its very name. But the mere existence of these principles is not sufficient to create an international. Just as a revolutionary party cannot be made to exist by decree; on the contrary, the indispensable condition of its existence is to be organically tied up with the working class -- so one can really speak of an International only to the degree that it is based on parties well-rooted in the working class. Whether or not we approved the creation, in 1938, of the P M R S (IVe), we agree in noting the fact that, if the principles of the Fourth International have today proved themselves more correct than ever, the practical bases, on the contrary, of the existence of the International have been in the last period constantly shrinking.

3) Recent events have, as a matter of fact, lessened the organizational and political cohesion of the P M R S (IVe): the period of the war has been marked by an indisputable organizational retreat. After the POI, it is the SWP of the USA which has been struck by a split which threatens its very life. These two essential strong bases being eliminated; the existence of the International itself is in peril. The Executive Committee of the International, which had never seriously functioned, ceased to exist at the time of the French crisis. The transfer of the IS was carried out in such a way as to break any continuity in the work. The refusal on the part of the IS to set up in Europe a collective Subsecretariat, the absence of any political document by the IS on the situation in Europe, and principally in France, over a very long period, are so many indications of the impossibility at the present time of considering this organism as the directing center, or the P M R S as the definitively constituted Bolshevik International: they are only the representatives of the movement for the creation of the Fourth International, the most important in

view of its international liaisons and the cadres they have organized, the decisive nucleus in view of its political program; but it is not the International itself.

4) In these conditions, the Central Committee decides:

a) to ask to be affiliated to the IS of the P M R S;

b) to undertake the necessary initiatives for the creation of a European Secretariat grouping all organizations which claim to support the program of the Fourth International.

c) to demand most pressingly of the comrades in the United States to join together again the ranks of the SWP in a single bloc oriented toward the winning of the revolutionary workers of America.

d) to request the I S to take the initiative in convoking in the coming months a carefully prepared conference of the whole international revolutionary movement.

(Translated by T.P.)

THE POLITICAL REARMAMENT OF THE FRENCH SECTION
IS AN URGENT TASK BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL

The Executive Committee has received from France a report written by M.H. and I.C. and dated August 7, 1940. The document is doubly alarming: by what it tells as well as by what it does not tell. On the fundamental questions of the political situation in France and the tasks of the revolutionary party, the document keeps silent or limits itself to extremely vague phrases. It becomes somewhat precise only in its second part, when it undertakes a "criticism" of the Fourth International.

Politically, the H.-C. Report cannot be characterized otherwise than as a capitulation to centrism. It sees as our foremost international task now, not the direct building of the world party of the socialist revolution, but "intervening in the various national and international regroupings."

It repeats the old centrist shibboleth of the German S.A.P. and the Brandlerites, that is: "one can really only speak of an International to the degree that it is based on parties well-rooted in the working class." That is, instead of predicating the existence of the International on the basis of program, the affiliation to it of "mass parties" is regarded as the determining factor.

This "argument" is even more ludicrous today than when it was employed in the old days by the S.A.P., since the old internationals and "well-rooted" parties of even the reformists and the Stalinists are completely losing their mass character. If anything, the latter have lost of a right to call themselves "parties" and "internationals" today than the Trotskyists whose cadres, although remaining relatively small, have firmly retained their existence -- an existence rooted in Marxist principles -- under the most difficult situations which have arisen as a result of the war and even increased their activities (Australia, Latin America) as well as registered a certain growth, fighting against the stream as in the past.

The practical organizational proposals made by H-C, in view of this political backsliding are completely liquidationist in nature. What do they propose? "Give the organization an extremely flexible system of functioning." What is meant by "flexible" in this instance? The document tells us: Take back into the organization "elements which were practically separated from us in the course of previous crises." What about the political basis on which the separations took place, one may ask -- how is that to be resolved? Not a word on that in the document.

A further proposal is made: "The definitive inclusion of a fraction of the PSOP." Very good. Again we ask, on what political basis? Here we get "greater clarity". . . but only by implication: This whole conglomeration is to replace the French party of the Fourth International by being crowned "Committee for the Fourth International."

The whole history of centrism shows that good will and devotion are not sufficient. The example of the P.O.U.M. is particularly valuable for France. That organization contained many extremely devoted revolutionists, but who were lacking something: Bolshhevik intransigence in matters of political principles. Nin began by criticising the methods of international selection of the Left Opposition. Like H. and C., he manifested his distrust of our work of political delimitation. Then he, too, wanted to follow up such criticism with "organizational mobility." He unified his fraction, without any political clarification, with the Catalan petty-bourgeois nationalist group of Maurin. The rest of the sad story of the POUM is present in everyone's memory.

The word "for" in the proposed name for the heterogeneous conglomeration to be known as the "Committee for the Fourth International" -- the document tells us not without irony -- "in no way conceals a fundamental political divergence with the way of posing the problem of the Fourth International such as it was defined by the World Conference of 1938." No, BUT. . . "it simply expresses the observation that the practical evolution of our movement has developed in a noticeably different way from what we had foreseen. . ."

The document bases this view as follows: "If the principles of the Fourth International have today proved themselves more correct than ever, the practical bases, on the contrary, of the existence of the International, have been in the last period shrinking constantly."

We don't know if the comrades who authored this document seriously understand what they themselves are writing here, or whether they take their own words seriously at all.

"The principles of the Fourth International have today proved themselves more correct than ever," they write. Yet they profess to see a decline for the International. . . In what? In the desertion of those same principles of that same organization by the revisionist minority (Burnham, Shachtman and Co.) of the American S.W.P. And it is such a "shrinking of the practical bases", such a desertion, "which threatens its (the International's) very life", we are told!

Burnham, Shachtman and Co. are people who have given up not only the theses of the Fourth International -- adopted by the World Conference! -- on the evaluation of the imperialist war, but rejected outright the Marxist theory of the state. They have had their revisionist views repudiated by a decisive majority of the strongest section of the Fourth International and by the vast majority of the other sections. And H.-C. regard this great organizational victory for the principles of the Fourth International, at the time of its first big test in the fire of war. . . as "an indisputable organizational retreat"!

It is clear that H-C are not very sure themselves of the principles on which they profess to base themselves. And that, incidentally, explains their readiness to carry out a genuine retreat all their own into the swamp of centrism.

The Fourth International has undergone a serious challenge, met it and conquered it -- in the form of the revisionist petty-bourgeois tendency of Burnham-Shachtman. Burnham may have retreated, as indeed he has: into the ranks of the class enemy. The former minority of the SWP may be in full flight, without any attempt to explain the evolution of their leader Burnham and the "principles" which guided it. But the Trotskyist majority of the SWP and the Fourth International, their ranks consolidated around its principles after a long and fruitful ideological struggle, marches forward. We, for our part, are confident that tried and tested French Trotskyists will follow the same path taken by the rest of the Fourth International.

The H-C orientation and their "evaluation" of the desertion of the petty-bourgeois opposition as an "indisputable organizational retreat" has its roots deeper, of course, than in mere misjudgment of organizational trends. In the case of C. it undoubtedly constitutes wishful thinking in the organizational sphere that results from his basic agreement in the past with revisionist political position of Burnham on the question of the USSR -- that touchstone upon which the Marxist theory of the state is tested in our days and around which our principles revolve.

The report of H. and C. does not devote a single word on the position of the French organization in regard to this question. I.C. has asserted for many years that the USSR is not a workers' state, without telling us what it is exactly. We don't know what the position of M.H. is. How is the organization divided in the discussion of this fundamental problem? What are the forces in the various camps? The two authors do not deem it necessary to inform the International on this burning question.

Yet, from their own experiences in the collapse of France, they must themselves affirm that the principles of the Fourth International have "proved themselves more correct than ever", while the principles and theories of all the reformists and centrists have crumbled into dust.

More than in any other country, the problem in France for the Fourth International is to know how to penetrate into the Stalinist ranks. But the struggle against Stalinism can be successful only if we rely upon a correct appreciation of the USSR.

The departure from principled considerations makes itself felt also in the authors' approach to the tactical questions of the day. Just one example: In a France that has succumbed, amid collapse and capitulation to Hitlerite Germany, to the Bonapartist regime of Petain, they estimate that this regime "will allow the (thoroughly rotten and decayed) trade unions to continue": that the latter even "can develop again" -- and with this even more ludicrous proviso: "to the extent that they can guarantee work to their members."

And this tactical "prognosis" is put forward by people who aver, by their own experiences, that our program has proved more correct than ever! Yet our Transitional Program, for instance, explains in great detail why the reformist trade unions -- unless we succeed beforehand

in transforming them into revolutionary instruments -- must crumble and disappear with the rest of the wreckage of bourgeois democracy in the course of the war. They simply forgot this correct prognosis along with the principles. A few weeks after penning their document, the Fourth International was to prove itself more correct than ever on this point too: the C.G.T. has been completely dissolved by the Petain regime and has disappeared without a trace!

A correct approach to the immediate and burning tasks of the French section of the Fourth International presupposes the political rearming of the organization and the rejection of the whole orientation of H and C.

That must begin by rejecting out of hand the proposed capitulation to centrism. Ours is not an organization "for" the Fourth International, but the organization of the Fourth International.

We do not deny that "in the course of future development of the political and economic situation of France there will be produced new regrouping within the French proletariat" in order to dissolve ourselves among them now. No, we do intend "to play in France the role of the revolutionary party which is historically necessary."

The French section must begin by reviving agitation -- particularly in the ranks of the Stalinist party -- on the basis of our basic principles, above all, our position on the USSR.

That alone can open up a road for us to the advanced workers, deceived so long by Stalinism and Popular Front politics, but now awakening to the realities of the working class struggle for emancipation.

We must rely, not on the old organizations of the proletariat which are doomed together with the rest of bourgeois democracy to which they were tied. We must unfurl the banner of the Fourth International in the practical organization of factory committees under the slogan of equalization of work, in the formation of housewives committees under the slogan of the people's control of prices against the profiteers, in the encouragement of workers defense guards against the native Fascist allies of the foreign oppressor.

We need, to sum up, a rearming of the French section by the decisive rejection of the policy of H-C and a return to the program of the Fourth International. That program alone, in the course of future developments and regroupings, can help us to take on flesh and blood and give the French section of the Fourth International the role assigned to it by history.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

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