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Note

The articles printed here were first published in two issues of the French edition of the *Bulletin Intérieur* of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International — Volume I, No. 3, May 1946 and Volume I, No. 4, July 1946.

Several articles in these two issues of the *Bulletin Intérieur* of the International Secretariat have already been published in English and are therefore not reprinted here. These are:

It Is Time to Grow Up — The Infantile Sickness of the Fourth International,
by Felix Morrow (*Fourth International*, July 1946)

On Comrade Morrow's Reply, by Pablo (*Fourth International*, July 1946)

and the following articles published in the *SWP Internal Bulletin*, Volume VIII, No. 7, June 1946:

Resolution of the International Secretariat (on the Referendum)

Resolution of the Belgian Section (on the Referendum)

Resolution of the SWP Plenum on the French Constitutional Referendum

Resolution on the PCI's Stand in the Constitutional Referendum,
by Goldman, Millner, Morrow

The Position of the French Party on the Referendum

By E. GERMAIN

The overturning of the former majority of the CC of the French section, and the shift, on the eve of the referendum, from a position of boycott to a "yes" position has burst open the abscess of the opportunist right wing before the eyes of the whole International. It is important to understand that this extremely serious deviation — the rightist position on the referendum — is not an isolated and incidental political "error," but the end-result — or, rather, the first end-result — of the entire development of the faction.

This is what must first be understood by comrades who are trying to understand the situation in the French party. They will then also understand the absolute necessity of the sharpest kind of struggle against this deviation which threatens to botch up one of the best conjunctures there has been for the rapid progress of the ideas of the International.

Question of "Tactic" or of Principle

Like every opportunist current which is not yet fully aware of itself and is only beginning to crystallize, the right wing of the PCI tries to give the impression that "in principle" it is in complete agreement with the general line of the International, and only questions of "tactics" separate us. But tactics have a strong backbone. It is astonishing that after twenty years' experience with the Stalinist jugglers of "tactics," such confusion can still reign in our ranks on these questions.

Our tactic is our method of applying our program. A Leninist tactic may include the most audacious turns — within the framework of program and principles. But at the moment when the "tactic" involves the abandonment, however "slight" and "accidental" it may seem, of some fundamental principle of our program, it ceases to be a Leninist tactic and becomes one of vulgar opportunism.

Opportunists always invoke "special conditions" to explain the necessity for "temporarily" hiding their banner. "In general" they are, of course, passionate partisans of the proletarian revolution. But here the unexpected occurs: while "agreeing in general," the opportunist discovers the need for a new formula, and under this the program is buried. When things become "normal" again it will be brought out from its tomb. The outbreak of the imperialist war "compelled" Kautsky to "state objectively" that the International was dead. When peace comes again, a new International will be built — until the next war comes. The "offensive of reaction" — an unforeseen accident in the course of the class war — compels the right wing of the PCI to bury "provisionally" its hostility to a bourgeois constitution. When the "yes" vote has triumphed, the right wing promises, of course, to fight this constitution all the more vigorously. Until the next "offensive of reaction," comrades?

For a revolutionist, it is clear that under no conditions can he take the slightest responsibility for a bourgeois constitution, just as under no conditions can he vote for military credits or take part in a government before the seizure of

power. Lenin expressed himself clearly enough on this subject in dealing with a particular situation of the civil war. The position of Trotsky on the question of voting credits in the Cortes during the Spanish civil war was no less categorical. And have we forgotten all of Trotsky's polemic against Brandler and Thalheimer, those inveterate centrists who, in 1923, gave "classic" expression to the opportunist application of the united front tactic? For us these questions are questions of principle. In losing sight of this essential idea, that is, the fundamental hostility of the revolutionary vanguard toward the *bourgeois state*, no matter what its government; in introducing into Bolshevik-Leninist policy the notorious confusion of the centrists between defense of workers' parties — cells of proletarian democracy within the framework of the bourgeois state — and defense of the "democratic" capitalist state even when these parties are at its head; — in this, the right wing of the PCI has taken the first step on the road which, in its windings, may bring it to complete abandonment of the revolutionary position.

An Opportunist Trial Balloon

Comrade Demaziere's resolution, "withdrawn" at the meeting of the Political Bureau on April 20, is a document which can be used by all sections of the International as study material on the nature of opportunism. It is this document which expresses the views of the minority with greatest clarity, and carries them to their ultimate conclusions. The comrades who voted for Lambert's "harmless" resolution at the CC on April 23 should understand this: What they did was precisely to thicken the smoke-screen behind which the resolute right-wingers are launching, one after another, their opportunist trial balloons.

For some time the question of the interdependence of objective and subjective factors in the determination of our political line has been an important subject of discussion in the International. Following Comrade Morrow, Comrade Demaziere became the attorney at the International Conference for the thesis according to which "under certain conditions" the subjective factor, "the mood of the masses," may be *decisive* in laying out the political line of a revolutionary party.

This discussion may have seemed "artificial" to certain comrades. But now scarcely a month later, Demaziere has given a perfect demonstration of the fact that the slightest "theoretical," "general" difference can have the most disastrous concrete political consequences. Starting from the fact that in "certain circumstances" the subjective factor and not the objective analysis can *fundamentally* determine the position of the party, he arrives at the conclusion that ". . . the attitude of the party on the constitutional referendum can be independent (!) of our estimate of the constitution itself." Then on what does it depend positively? On the attitude of the bourgeoisie and on the reactions of the working class. But in the course of the resolution the "reactions of the working class" completely evaporate. No trace of them can be found. Quite logically, then, Demaziere

determines the position of the party from the attitude of the bourgeoisie, or more precisely — from the position taken by the MRP! It is Francisque Gay who is to decide whether or not a Bolshevik party shall vote for a bourgeois constitution! This is where opportunism leads.

It is obvious that sharp turns of the class enemy can be of extreme importance in calling for this or that answer from the proletariat and its vanguard.* But these turns do not fall from the sky. In the last analysis, they are themselves the result of the totality of objective factors, or more precisely, of the class relationship of forces *as reflected in the head of the bourgeoisie*. To the extent that a decision of the bourgeoisie unbalances the sum total of pressure methods which the capitalists have at their disposal, it becomes in turn an important objective factor which must be attentively watched. But the elementary rule of wisdom, in politics as in applied psychology, is to start from objective reality as it is; and then, to examine how far the representation of reality in the brain of some individual and the consciousness of a class corresponds to this reality, and finally, to what extent this representation can react on reality or even modify it. The opposite procedure — the method of idealists in philosophy and opportunists in politics — leads its practitioners to look at the facts, not as they are, but through glasses colored by preconceptions. It is not the *real* relationship of class forces which interests Demaziere and the right wing of the PCI. They do not study the political, economic and social *possibility* that the bourgeoisie may launch an offensive against the working class. They do not try to estimate the capacity of the proletariat to resist. No, they expect a “blow from the right” in the leading committee of the MRP — and this is enough for them to transform a question of principle into a question of tactics, to discover an “imminent danger” for the working class, and to see the only road to salvation in voting for the bastard constitution. It is no longer the “subjective factor” which determines their policy, it is the conjunctural designs of the bourgeois party. The opportunist trial balloon has torn itself away from the slender thread which held it to the solid rock of the revolutionary program, and it blows helter-skelter, carried by the wind of bourgeois public opinion.

Panic Is a Bad Counsellor

The supporters of the “yes” position find their “crushing argument” in the “offensive of reaction.” “. . . The bourgeoisie wants to go still further, it wants to make the elections a test of strength, and on the basis of victory to create the conditions for more firmly and more solidly regrouping its forces for its future offensive. . . In this struggle we are at the side of the working class (!), against the offensive of the bourgeoisie. . .” (Lambert resolution.) In other words, the right wing proposes a tactical shift because a decisive battle is in preparation. But is this actually so?

* “Kornilov’s revolt is an extremely unexpected, and, one might say, unbelievable turn in the course of events.

“Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision of tactics. And, as is the case with every revision, one must be extremely cautious lest one lose sight of principles.” (Lenin, “On the Road to Insurrection.” Lenin’s emphasis.)

It is more difficult, to be sure, for us in Brussels to judge the situation than for the comrades in Paris. We are far from having the necessary data for a complete picture of the French situation. Nevertheless, we have no doubt at all that in France, as in all other countries of western Europe, the bourgeoisie is at present still unable to govern without the direct help of the reformists and the Stalinists. We see absolutely no foundation for claiming that the French capitalists feel themselves strong enough now to eliminate the opportunist leaders from the government. Let us not forget that at the time of de Gaulle’s resignation the bourgeoisie was forced to make a very sharp retreat. To be sure, it is trying with all its power to prepare a brilliant revenge for the “savior of France.” But the relationship of *real* class forces — which Comrade Demaziere wisely refrains from analyzing! — prevents the bourgeoisie at present from carrying out its plans. The present period in France is a typically transitional period — as it is, in a very general way, in the rest of western Europe. A regrouping is taking place on the Left, extremely slow to be sure, but already quite tangible and disturbing to the bourgeoisie: crystallizing of an opposition in the CGT. . . , formation of a left wing in the SFIO, growing influence of the PCI. At the same time, there is no question that a certain demoralization is beginning to reveal itself among the workers. This is inevitable, and just as it has always been: for these are the two contradictory currents resulting from the deception of the masses by their present leadership; and the interdependence of these currents is regulated by the play of the subjective factor. In the last analysis it is the revolutionary party, and it alone, which can prevent the complete demoralization of the proletariat, although that does not exclude the possibility of a spontaneous upsurge before the party grows seriously stronger.

On the other side of the barricade analogous processes are going on. The bourgeoisie, which for a moment was unanimously grouped around de Gaulle, lost its cohesiveness in political action when he left the political scene. The MRP, which appeared for a moment as THE party of the bourgeoisie, has lost much of its political stock. On the right, the PRL follows closely at its heels and is trying to win over the most “conscious” section of the MRP’s electoral following. But the PRL itself is a lifeless machine, set up primarily to allow a number of parliamentary sharks to keep their positions, and it is poorly suited to serve as a rallying point for the petty bourgeoisie. During the whole period of political ferment that France is now going through, new reactionary bourgeois and petty-bourgeois groups will appear and disappear before Caesar makes his entrance. To recognize the danger, to warn the workers in advance, to be ready to act at the decisive moment — these are excellent qualities for a serious party. But the opportunists of the PCI systematically transform these qualities into their complementary faults: instead of recognizing the real danger, they take the rolling of the drums of the bourgeois press for the rumbling of cannon. Instead of warning the workers, they spread panic. Instead of being ready to act at the opportune moment, they react at every instant, and always with rightist reflexes.

In reality, “the offensive of the bourgeoisie against the

workers' parties" is only one of many episodes in the interminable bargainings which constitute the story of tri-partyism. The position of the MRP toward the bourgeoisie strongly resembles that of the SFIO toward the proletariat. Up to now these two bankrupts were content to mutually exchange their bad checks, but before the election they will have to balance their accounts and show that they did everything they could to at least pay off their debts. As things appear now, it is most likely that these brave gentlemen will find themselves, after the referendum or after the elections, together again on the same team, strengthened perhaps by a fourth companion. By an ironical reversal it is now the bourgeoisie — or the MRP — who, in order to get more concessions in the future, are confronting the "workers' parties with their responsibilities." But the SP and the CP do not want to take power either when invited to by the right wing of the PCI*, or when forced to by the MRP. That is why the shrill cries of "YES" from the opportunist leaders so strongly resemble the cries uttered by children at night to bolster up their courage.

Here is the explanation for the source of our opportunists' panic. It is not the working class which is faced with a decisive test because of the bourgeoisie demanding power, it is the opportunist leaders who are seized with fright at the perspective of themselves having to govern! Demaziere, who reproaches the Leninists for reasoning "beyond time and space," thus demonstrates that these are *relative* concepts in politics. For the opportunists, "time" is the parliamentary agenda, "space" is the editorial office of a petty bourgeois newspaper! Here is the source of the wind of panic. As for us, our time is the calendar of social struggles; our space, the factories and the streets.

"Don't Bolster Up Abstentionism"

Another main argument of the right wing is the need for "combatting that abstentionism which is a sign of a certain demoralization among the working classes." (Demaziere resolution in the PB, April 20.) Obviously, to a certain extent the abstentionism of the masses reflects their complete disgust with all parties, that is, an a-political tendency dangerous for the future of the working class. However, it is equally undeniable that last year the abstentionist wave in the cantonal elections was followed by an extraordinarily broad participation in the elections to the Constituent. Similarly, all observers agree that there will be many more abstentions at the referendum than at the June 2 elections. Why? Because the importance, the interest of the referendum

* The way in which the slogan "Break the Coalition" was presented in the electoral campaign of October 1945 demonstrated for the first time the difference between the opportunist tendencies of the PCI and Leninist policy. The tendency of the right wing was to "invite" the SP and CP to break the coalition, pointing out all the advantages of a break with the bourgeoisie. Leninist policy insists on the fact that it is the masses who must compel the SP and CP to break the coalition. With the right-wingers, the formula "SP-CP-CGT Government" was presented as a real solution to the problems of the hour. With Leninists, it is a formula for the education of the masses, a formula which, if realized, becomes a step toward seizure of power, but without the least illusion being sown as to the positive possibilities of the formula.

has not been understood by the masses. The workers have the impression that what happens with the constitution will affect their own fate not at all, or only slightly. The dialectical subtleties of the "NO" defenders in explaining the "undemocratic" character of the constitution; the oratorical flights of the "yes" supporters in explaining that "the French people must vote *yes* in order to emerge from the situation of provisional government" — none of this touches the working masses or the little people. From this point of view the abstentionist current is a confused and awkward expression of a fundamentally healthy current, a current of class consciousness which understands that none of the conflicts which are tearing decadent French society to pieces, none of the questions which deeply stir the different classes, will be decided at the referendum. The duty of the party is to give to this legitimate sentiment of disgust a politically conscious expression, to transform it from an a-political to a revolutionary sentiment.*

The origins of abstentionism show still more clearly that what we are dealing with is a contradictory phenomenon which deserves better than the simple epithet of "demoralization." The disillusionment with the opportunist leaders; the bankruptcy of the policy of "production"; the contempt for the endless repeating of empty slogans; the knowledge that the policy of "reconstruction" has only reproduced the old rottenness — all these sentiments constitute to a certain degree a *step ahead* over the illusions the masses were nourishing immediately after the "liberation." They can manifest themselves in a strengthening of the ideology and the fighting spirit of the working class, provided the revolutionary party succeeds in canalizing them along the correct road. But if the proletariat sees no way out, these sentiments can engender demoralization and defeat of the entire class. *To fight abstentionism and the demoralization of the proletariat means to show the workers another way out, another road than that of governmental collaboration, another policy than that of Gouin and Thorez!*

Now the opportunist champions of voting "yes" act exactly the opposite. Taking as their reason the "abstentionist current" which threatens to weaken the proletariat just when the "offensive of reaction" has been launched, they call upon the workers to vote for a constitution which has nothing to say to them — that is, they show the workers exactly the same road which has already led to their present degree of demoralization! This policy becomes all the more dangerous if one looks at the referendum against the background of the political development in France during the last six months. Well aware of its present weak-

* Personally, the author is for boycott. The boycott is nothing new in the history of revolutionary parties. It has been practiced many times, as for example in the various elections to the Russian Duma and in the Spanish municipal elections in 1930. We prefer boycott to "NO", in order to mark off our position, both from tri-partyism and from the still more reactionary position of the bourgeois parties, and because we think that there were objective possibilities of politicalizing and canalizing a large abstentionist current among the masses. But we are deliberately refraining here from any argument in favor of boycott — which, of course, starts from the same principled position as the "NO" — in order to refute solely the arguments of the "yes" supporters.

ness, knowing that for a whole period it will have to govern through the intermediary of the reformists and Stalinists, the bourgeoisie tries to work out its own political regroupment and that of the petty-bourgeoisie around its banner, by cleverly playing with the responsibility of government. Knowing that in the present circumstances no government is capable of solving its difficulties, the bourgeoisie tries increasingly to throw this responsibility on to the backs of the workers' parties, with the threefold aim of discrediting them, discouraging their militants, and demoralizing the entire working class. This was already very apparent in the circumstances which occasioned the sudden resignation of de Gaulle. The refusal of the MRP at the last moment to vote for the constitution is a maneuver worthy of the Jesuit secret partners in this party, who occupy their places within the framework of this policy. Having "helped" the SP and the CP to draw up the constitution — that is to say, having won an endless series of concessions by using de Gaulle's resignation as its single weapon of blackmail — the MRP sneaks out at the last moment and throws the whole responsibility for the limping constitution on the workers' parties. It is clear that the French proletariat can gain no more than a negative experience from this constitution. That cannot but sharpen the demoralization, so long as there is no other position for the workers. Instead of calling the infant what it is, a bastard, for which the conscious workers must positively refuse all responsibility, our right-wingers use the fact that Father MRP finally sneaked out, as a reason for asking the workers to recognize the constitution as the legitimate child of workers' organizations! Not only do they thus fall for the game of reaction and facilitate the real anti-proletarian offensive which lies ahead, but they discredit the revolutionary party as well as the traditional workers' parties. From the moment that the right wing of the PCI abandoned a principled revolutionary position, its "intelligent" tactic, like Stalin's successive "clever tricks," began to turn around on itself against the proletariat and its vanguard.

The "United Front at the Polls"

We have already mentioned the rightist deviation — classical in the history of the Third International — of Brandler and Thalheimer and the "socialist-communist" government of Saxony and Thuringia. One must reread the illuminating pages that Trotsky devoted to this subject in order to realize with astonishment and regret that 23 years later a Trotskyist leader, who is supposed to have long since assimilated the main lessons of the degeneration of Stalinism, is repeating the same sort of arguments as those of the German centrists on the question of the united front. "To make a united front *at the polls*" (emphasis by D. himself, if you please!) — that, according to the Demaziere resolution, is what the offensive of the bourgeoisie requires of the revolutionary party.

This rightist conception of the united front starts from a position exactly opposite to the starting point of the Leninist united front — and it also ends, of course, in an opposite outcome. For Lenin and Trotsky, the united front means this: against an offensive of reaction, the workers want to answer *with action*. To make this action unanimous

and general, and in view of the fact that an important section of the workers still support the traditional workers parties, the revolutionary party proposes to these parties to "fight together" against the reaction, while marching separately. The revolutionary party is convinced that in the struggle the mass of supporters of the opportunist parties will recognize both the superiority of Bolshevik methods over reformist methods, and the absolute necessity of passing beyond the framework of "bourgeois democracy." Conceived of in this fashion, *but only in this fashion*, the United Front becomes a necessary stage in the mobilizing and winning of the masses by the revolutionary party, that is to say, a decisive step toward the seizure of power.

The "united front at the polls" corresponds to none of these premises. Instead of the workers being called on to *fight* side by side — Socialists, Stalinists, and revolutionists — they are called upon to *vote* together, and to vote for a bourgeois constitution! The "answer to reaction" which, as an *action of the masses*, constitutes a bridge toward an offensive of the workers (Kornilov, proposals of Trotsky in Germany in 1932, France 1934, etc.) is presented here as an electoral maneuver, that is to say, it benumbs the alertness of the workers, sows illusions as to the possibility of "halting the reaction" by the ballot, and results in fatal demoralization. Instead of demonstrating before the workers the superiority of Bolshevik methods of action over the cowardice of the opportunist leaders, it adapts revolutionary policy to vulgar opportunism, that is, discredits the party. Finally, instead of helping the masses to free themselves from bourgeois democracy, it imprisons them there by declaring the decisive battlefield to be the polling booth! Far from being a step toward winning the masses and taking power, the anti-Leninist tactic of the "united front at the polls" constitutes in reality a step toward the integration of the party into the framework of the official labor movement, that is to say, a step toward betrayal.

"To Vote for the Workers' Parties or to Vote for Reaction"

Let us admit for a moment that the referendum question is not a question of principle. Let us admit that in certain circumstances a Bolshevik party could vote for a bourgeois constitution, or vote military credits, or enter a "workers'" government — positions which have all been stigmatized, in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky, as an abandonment of program. Let us admit all this for a moment, and follow our right-wingers on their terrain of "tactics." What is the "conjunctural" aspect which the referendum is being given? It is a question — say the right-wing spokesmen as well as the latest deserter, Marcoux — of voting either for the workers' parties or for the reaction. No other position is possible. But is this really so?

Actually, the real voting for or against the workers' parties will be on June 2, when the French masses will give or will fail to give an absolute majority to the SP and CP. *The referendum on the constitution, like the referendum of October 15, is intended precisely to limit, and thwart the effects of universal suffrage.* Against a clear majority of the SP-CP in the Constituent, the first referendum could oppose the vote for de Gaulle. Against a new working-class

majority in the National Assembly, the second referendum may oppose rejection of the constitution.

Under these conditions what should the *tactical* attitude of the party be? It must enlighten the workers on the real character of the referendum. It must put them on guard against the attempts of the reaction to force upon the working class the field of battle *so carefully chosen by the reaction itself*. The party must say to the workers: *It is false*, what the capitalists tell you about the "fate of the country" being decided by the referendum. *It is false*, what the Stalinists and reformists repeat to you, that rejection of the constitution will put reaction in power. Even before the elections these people are looking for an alibi in order to avoid the responsibility of power. *On the electoral field* it is the June 2 elections that will be decisive. In these elections you must send a clear working-class majority to parliament. You must then compel the Socialists and the Communists to take full power. If they are to be able to move ahead and to attack the monopolies, they must not have their hands tied in advance by the adoption of a constitution which is designed solely to perpetuate, after the elections, the disastrous coalition with the MRP. The reason you will not vote for the constitution is so that you can struggle for an SP-CP government, so that you can block the road to reaction *in the factories and the streets, where the fate of the country will really be decided*. It is your class action which tomorrow will force your reformist and Stalinist "leaders" to break the governmental coalition. It is your class action which will compel them to force upon the bourgeoisie *nationalizations without compensation or indemnities*. But then you *cannot vote for a constitution which automatically provides compensation for every nationalisation!*

Such language can and will find a response among the masses. It has nothing in common with the sterile chatter of the sectarians or of Comrade Marcoux's "conceited imbeciles." But it seems that this language is becoming separated by a wider and wider gulf from the opportunist language of the right wing of the PCI . . .

The argument of "voting for the workers' parties" is even more false if we look squarely at the simple facts: The constitution was drawn up by the coalition government. It offers the bourgeoisie not only every guarantee, but substantial promises as well. It leaves the door open *both* to bicameralism *and* to the separation of powers. The reformist and Stalinist leaders cleverly develop among the advanced workers the illusion that the constitution — which "in brief" sanctifies the "right to work," the vote for women, nationalisations, etc. — is being attacked by the "reaction" because it was drawn up by the workers' parties; and at the same time they turn to the bourgeoisie, beating their breasts and solemnly swearing that this constitution has nothing in common with a socialist-communist constitution. The bourgeoisie, on the other hand, assigns the MRP the task in the government of getting all the necessary concessions so that, if need be, it can "keep going" on the basis of the new constitution; and at the same time it tries to excite the middle class and all the conservative elements by calling the constitution a "socialist-communist constitution." This will also allow them to place on the workers' parties the responsibility for the continuing misery under the regime

of this new constitution. And our intelligent "tacticians" fall into the trap! When they state that, "like it or not," it is a question of "voting for the workers' parties," they strengthen the illusions of even the most conscious workers, they fall for the game of reaction, and above all *they help the bourgeoisie and its agents in the working class to conceal from the proletariat the third way*, which is the only way of getting out of the present mess!

If we want to restore the meaning of the referendum in a precise formula, we must say that it is a question of *voting for the platform of tri-partyism*. The constitution faithfully reflects all the characteristics of the coalition; it rests completely within the framework of bourgeois society; it gives the masses the illusion of a few democratic concessions — completely harmless — while establishing the general framework that makes possible a development to the right, including a Bonapartist coup d'etat; it utilizes a certain neo-Jacobinic phraseology in order to mobilize the workers for the rebuilding of capitalism; it prostitutes socialist methods and principles to the service of capitalist and colonial oppression. *The opposition of the bourgeoisie to this constitution is determined*, in addition to the tactical considerations, by the *insufficiently reactionary character of the constitution*. But the task of the revolutionary party is not to support a "liberal" bourgeois platform against a reactionary bourgeois platform — and most certainly not in the case where rejection of the "liberal" constitution does not at all mean the triumph of a more reactionary constitution, but merely the necessity of drawing up a new one! The duty of the party is to set up, in opposition to both these forms of sanctifying capitalist exploitation, its own platform of transitional and democratic slogans, the platform which shows the way and forms the bridge to the Soviet Constitution which will be the emancipation of the workers!

Of course, if tomorrow the workers rise up as a result of defeat in the referendum; if they go on strike or seize arms to "defend their constitution," we shall be at their side with all our forces — as we were at the side of the Spanish workers who rose up to defend "their" Republic. But in the course of their struggle we will explain to them, and they will understand well, that to decisively crush reaction it is not enough to "defend" a constitution which is not theirs but only that of the rotten bourgeois democracy, it is necessary to seize the factories and wrench the power from the bourgeoisie — just as the Spanish workers clearly understood that in order to fight Franco they had to take the factories, seize arms and occupy the streets. But even in the course of their struggle, while fighting at their side arms in hand, we would refuse to take the least responsibility for the bourgeois constitution, we would continue to fight it in all our agitation — just as the Spanish Bolshevik-Leninists had to fight the bourgeois Republic and the Popular Front, even while they fought side by side with the workers who seemed to have risen up in defense of these. That is the dialectic of the Leninist United Front. That is the position that leads to the strengthening of the party, to clarifying the consciousness of the masses, and to the preparation for taking power. The opportunist position suppresses the ideological independence of the party, sows

confusion in the vanguard, and thus prepares the way for demoralization and defeat.

The Referendum and the Breaking Of the Coalition

That the constitution is a product of tri-partyism, not even the most inveterate right-winger on the CC of the PCI would dare to deny. But a "new fact" has come up to cloud the vision of our impressionists: Didn't the MRP "break the coalition" on the plane of the referendum? At the CC meeting of April 23, Marcoux still hears the voice from the past: "so long as the coalition is not broken in the domain of government, the boycott must be maintained." But the siren call of opportunism is too sweet. Marcoux in his turn succumbs and discovers that "only a 'yes' vote makes it possible to pose concretely — and on its own feet — the slogan 'break the coalition'" (!) It's true that if in doing a pirouette you are overcome with dizziness, you won't easily be able to distinguish the position "on one's feet" from its opposite . . .

When the opportunists happen to repeat correct formulas, they are like sleep walkers; they do it unconsciously. Awaken them, the damage is done and they fall from the roof. When the right-wing comrades repeat, with the comrades of the left, the formula "The constitution is the product of tri-partyism," they do not understand what this formula really means. It does not imply merely that the constitution includes all the necessary guarantees for the bourgeoisie. It also implies that the constitution is a *springboard prepared in advance* for a new leap of tri-partyism after the elections! This character flows not only from the skillful admixtures of mutual concessions, but also from the *confusion* and the *vagueness* of certain clauses, notably those concerning the limits on the authority of the French Council of the Union, which allow a very elastic interpretation. In other words, if tomorrow the MRP is compelled by events to prolong its participation in the government by defending the new constitution, let us say, before the Assembly, it can do so without fundamentally abandoning its principled position while on the other hand *obtaining from the Stalinist and reformist leaders* substantial new concessions *within the framework of the Constitution*.

The fact that the MRP breaks the coalition only on the plane of the referendum and not on the plane of government has very specific reasons. It is not only a question of its "competition" with the PRL. What is involved also is the fact that the bourgeoisie wants to continue to keep the hands of the labor leaders tied even while refusing responsibility for their acts. Thus it strengthens its own position and still continues to give the labor bureaucrats the alibi they need before the masses as an excuse for their inertia. It is precisely because the constitution is *designed to perpetuate tri-partyism* that the MRP can afford the luxury of "breaking the coalition" on the referendum. It knows very well that even if the "yes" wins, the result will in no way be a socialist-communist government, but a new governmental coalition.

As we have said, "breaking the coalition" is the MRP's blackmail of the labor leaders, just as the latter's furious

defense of voting "yes" constitutes blackmail — shamefaced and modest — of the bourgeoisie. *The "labor" leaders can conduct such a violent campaign for voting "yes" precisely because they know that the adoption of the constitution does not in any way rule out the formation of a new coalition government!*

But there is more. "Has the MRP broken the coalition on the question of the constitution?" How then do the workers' leaders react? Why don't they take advantage of the occasion, after the break by the MRP, to introduce a series of amendments which they had previously withdrawn in order to get agreement from the MRP? *Because the Constitution, such as it is, must continue after the election to furnish the framework of tri-partyism. That is what the party should tell the workers!* If the coalition must be broken on the plane of government, the first step must be to reject the constitution which establishes the general framework for it.

But even if the coalition had been on the governmental plane, the party would have had to be against voting for the constitution. When the coalition is broken the workers' parties will be able to move forward. But the constitution ties their hands in advance. *The breaking of the coalition, the formation of a socialist-communist government, would thus find its natural extension both in rejection of the present constitution, which, as even the labor leaders admit, IS NOT a socialist-communist constitution, and in the drawing up, thanks to a working-class majority in parliament, of a new constitution perpetuating the new conquests of the workers.* Turn the question as you please, the constitution has meaning only within the framework of tri-partyism, whose natural product it is. *The slogan of breaking the coalition has meaning only if it is accompanied by refusal to vote for the constitution.*

When the PCI calls upon the workers to vote YES in the referendum, every conscious worker has the right to ask: "But does all your agitation for breaking the coalition mean merely that you want the MRP ministers to get out of government, *but that the government should continue with the same policy as before?* What do you ask of a socialist-communist government? That it vote for nationalizations without compensation? But the constitution stipulates the contrary. That it give complete independence to Indo-China? The constitution says that Indo-China is tied to the Bank of Baudouin, and tied by an agreement 'freely given' (!) within the framework of the French Union! That the army of Leclerc, Bethouard, and de Lattre de Tassigny be replaced by people's militias? But the constitution sanctifies this army under the pompous title of 'republican' army! There is not a grain of logic to be discovered in your position!" On the other hand there is much logic in the above statement, for it shows the absurdity of tying up the "Yes" with the slogan "Break the coalition," *as Leninists understand it*; and it shows us also the meaning which the right-wingers give the slogan of a socialist-communist government — that of an electoral formula, a veritable universal cure-all the content of which is not so different from the "electoral programs" of the reformists-Stalinists, and which is not a step toward the proletarian revolution.

"A screen for the bourgeois government, a lightning-rod against popular indignation, an instrument for deceiving the masses" — that is how Lenin, in *On the Road to Insurrection*, characterizes the coalition of workers' parties with bourgeois parties. We can say that the constitution which issued from this coalition is designed to serve the same function. In calling upon the workers to vote for this constitution the right-wingers of the PCI unconsciously assist the bourgeoisie in achieving its aims.

"To Remain Outside the Workers' Parties When They Stand Alone"

We showed at the beginning that opportunists are generally distinguished by this: the abandoning of a principled position under "special conditions" for "tactical reasons." Unfortunately it seems — as is always the case — that whenever principle is abandoned, the "tactic" which is worked out is an opportunist tactic. Marcoux, whose capricious leaps have become, by an unlucky arithmetical accident, a decisive factor in the policy of the PCI, jumps the whole way and transforms the opportunist tactic into a new opportunist principle. In his letter of the 24th—most of the "arguments" of which have already been taken over by Demazière and have been answered by us here—he writes as follows: "One cannot with impunity remain outside the workers' parties — which stand alone on the constitutional question — and pretend that he knows how to make use 'boldly' (as we often say) of democratic slogans." Words, errors, confusion!

We would like to know how "making use of democratic slogans" requires the adoption of a constitution every page of which is a negation of these slogans. But it is precisely while "boldly" putting forward democratic slogans that we *refuse* to vote for the constitution. We are against any form of second Chamber — that is why we will not vote for the constitution! We are for immediate and complete independence of the colonies — that is why we will not vote for the constitution! We are for the recall of deputies — that is why we will not vote for the constitution! We are for people's militias, which elect their own officers — that is why we are not for the constitution! Each of these slogans is a democratic slogan. Each one can be excellently illustrated and popularized in terms of the most recent experiences of the masses. Each one calls on them *not to vote for the constitution!*

The question becomes more serious when Marcoux sets up the principle that a weak revolutionary party cannot vote in a different way from the workers' parties, when these parties stand alone. Here abandonment of principle leads straight to abandonment of program. And if tomorrow the bourgeois parties en bloc should reject an accord with Ho-Chi-Minh because they find him too "liberal," would you vote for him, Comrade Marcoux? * And if the bourgeois parties should refuse en bloc to accept a certain

* What is involved here is not a simple enumeration of more or less "absurd" examples, but of situations which are already confronting various of our sections. The first, for example, applies to the Dutch section, the second and third to the English section.

nationalization with compensation, would you vote for it? And if all the bourgeois parties together opposed the military budget of a workers' government, would you vote for it, Comrade Marcoux? Would you refuse to vote for it even if your abstention should cause the government to fall?

We hope the sentence came from Marcoux's pen in a moment of carelessness. But we shall ask him not only to impose greater discipline on his pen in the future, but to understand that there exists a *logical bond* between the different examples we have given. To vote for a bourgeois constitution IS the same kind of act as voting for an agreement — even if a "liberal" one — which sanctifies colonial exploitation; or voting for a reorganization of capitalism on a "nationalized" basis; or voting for national defense. "Between fighting Kornilov and supporting Kerensky, there is a difference, there is a boundary," says Lenin. This boundary is the defense or sanctifying of capitalism and its state, no matter in what field. No party can cross this line without taking a step toward betrayal.

The French Section Faces a Decisive Turn

The history of the French section since the beginning of the war is typical of most, if not all, of the sections of the European continent. In a state of disintegration at the beginning of the war, the party staged a magnificent comeback thanks to its loyalty to Leninist program and thanks to the enthusiasm and courage of its members. But the long years of illegality, as well as the constant urge to fight against the policies of the big workers' parties which were reaching the heights of betrayal, developed dangerous sectarian currents within it. In the first decisive moment, at the time of the "liberation," this sectarianism paralyzed the party, rendered it incapable of seizing the occasion, slowed down its reactions, and in fact caused it to lose a precious half-year's opportunity for growth.

But the party finally emerged from its illegality, not only physically but also subjectively. It established contact with real life, it acquired its first political experiences, to put it accurately. It met with curiosity, tolerance and even sympathy from not insignificant layers of advanced workers who were sick of Stalinism and reformism. It began to stop acting like a propaganda circle and suddenly became a Party, in the real sense of the word.

At this point the sharp turn intoxicated numerous comrades in the leadership. Haunted by fear of "relapsing into sectarianism"—"which did us so much damage," no doubt!—brooding tenderly over the "meagre ties with the masses" *without understanding that these ties are not the result of some shrewd tactic* but of a general current of radicalization spreading through the working class, the right wing of the leadership manifested more and more a sorry tendency to adapt themselves to their environment, to sacrifice essentials for passing successes, to give up persistent efforts, to relax the strictness of political line, to lose confidence in the *program* as the essential element for our victory. This lack of confidence reveals itself in a deepgoing pessimism which, in turn, engenders an impatience to achieve "immediate gains." Seeing the "weakness of the revolutionary party," they hope nevertheless to become an "active factor" by making use of subtle "tactical" formulations. They replace

slow and patient pursuit of the revolutionary goal with a series of nervous acrobatic stunts, and end up finding themselves dashed to the ground. One should reread the fine instructive pages which Trotsky in *The Third International After Lenin* devoted to the tactics of the young Communist parties. The right-wingers of the PCI would do well to learn every sentence by heart.

The decisive turn which the French PCI faces is nothing new in the workers' movement. Every young and inexperienced revolutionary party — inexperienced in *concrete politics*, as even comrades who have been in our ranks for a decade and a half can be! — has had to pass this test. The Bolshevik Party met it, in a certain sense, in February 1917. The German Communist Party faced it in 1923, the POUM in 1935 when the Popular Front was formed. The fate of the party is in the last analysis decided by this problem of forces: Which factor will be stronger, the impatience of the leaders and the immaturity of the militant membership, on the one hand, or on the other hand, the capacity of the leaders to learn and the healthy proletarian instinct of the rank and file workers?

And now we must make a very serious statement. When the delegate of the Belgian section returned to Brussels after the last Congress of the French PCI he remarked to us: "No worker would have been able to breathe the atmosphere of that convention. It was a convention of petty-bourgeois elements, intellectuals and functionaries, not a proletarian convention." We know that the PCI has in its ranks many very worthy worker militants. We have noted with pleasure and enthusiasm that it was beginning to get a foothold in the factories and even in the trade union movement. But is it an accident that the party spokesman at the last Congress of the CGT was a teacher, when the trade union spokesmen of our American, Belgian, English, Dutch, Chilean, etc., parties are metal workers, miners and transport workers? What is the social composition of the French CC, or rather, *what environment do they live in?* It is not demagogic to pose this question. *There is a relationship*

between the CC's turn and the panic in the editorial rooms, just as there was a relationship between Shachtman's turn in 1939 and the anti-Soviet pressure from the petty-bourgeois environment of New York.

We know that the situation is not hopeless. We know that the French CC is made up of honest, sincere comrades, capable of learning and developing, that the real "hardened right-wingers" among them are not many. We know, too, that if the present crisis is surmounted, it can be a beneficial thing for the future of the party. What is required above all, if the party is to have rapid growth in the period ahead, is that it be *immunized against the danger of opportunism*. If the party assimilates the lesson set before it by the opportunist error on the referendum question, it can and will acquire this immunity.

But for that, not only is a reeducation of the party, above all of its leadership, needed, but also a decisive change in its social composition and in the sphere of recruitment. *The serious thing is that the growth of the party in the last year has not increased the percentage of factory workers but rather has lessened it.* A sharp turn against this state of affairs is required — as sharp as against the policies of opportunism.

The health of any biological organism is demonstrated by its capacity to react rapidly and vigorously against the presence of hostile elements within it. The health of a political organization is proved by the rapidity and the seriousness of its reaction to attempts to inculcate in it policies alien and hostile to its program and its aims. We are firmly convinced that our French brother-party will prove itself a fundamentally healthy organization. But the change must come quickly, for the developing situation in France will become more and more favorable to a wide deployment of the party forces, and a rapid growth of its influence. And the unfortunate aspect of these opportunists is that they botch up not only their own policies but also the finest opportunities history has offered us.

May 5, 1946

"Nonsense" and the Referendum

By PIERRE FRANK

"On the question of the referendum theoretical concepts are nonsense. I determine our position as a function of the relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat." So spoke Comrade Demazière in the PB discussion which was to determine the party position on the referendum, after the break between the Socialists and Stalinists on the one hand and the MRP on the other. These words speak more significantly than volumes, for they show clearly how certain comrades arrive at party policy.

The party stands upon a doctrine, which is its fundamental base, gives it its orientation, and defines its strategy and tactics under all circumstances. At least this is what our teachers have taught. We could give example after example. There has been not a single serious crisis in the workers' movement where Marxists have not had to defend principles and theory against those who propose solutions that are more "practical," more "realistic," and better "tactical-

ly." How often have they appeared as conservatives, against the theoreticians of "action" for action's sake? It is unfortunate that the members of the French party do not yet have available the documents of the last great discussion in which Trotsky took part. They would see how he once again started out from the ABC's of Marxism, defending theoretical principles — which certain people considered to be dogmatism and sectarianism — against Burnham, Shachtman and Co., who wanted to determine their policy solely as a function of "concrete political issues." While Burnham and Shachtman claimed that "agreement or disagreement on the more abstract doctrines of dialectical materialism does not necessarily affect today's and tomorrow's concrete political issues," Trotsky showed that "only upon the basis of a unified Marxist conception is it possible to correctly approach 'concrete' questions."

To the devil with the "nonsense" of Marx, Lenin and

Trotsky in determining our position on the war, thought Shachtman! To the devil with this "nonsense" in determining party tactics in the unions, someone else will say! To the devil with this "nonsense" in determining our position in an electoral struggle, says Demazière! The only thing that counts is the "relationship of forces" — and we should very much like to know how Demazière, in some different way from our teachers, can measure or modify the relationship of forces without this "nonsense."

To be sure, the resolution which Comrade Demazière voted for and which unfortunately was adopted by a majority of the PB, ends with a few words in favor of this "nonsense." But these words are spoken like a ritual, like the polite formula "Respectfully yours" at the end of a letter the contents of which are devoid of all respect toward the person addressed. The structure of this resolution is quite symptomatic of the method by which it was drawn up: first the tactics are taken up, and at the end, without any real connection, a few theoretical comments are tacked on. We proceed in exactly opposite fashion: first we must theoretically determine our position; after that, and in relation to the tendencies of the masses, we have to find the correct tactic for leading them from where they are to where we want them to go.

Before coming to the question of the referendum itself, we should mention a point on which the opponents of this "nonsense" and the partisans of the "relationship of forces" would do well to meditate a little. Among the chief characteristics of our epoch are its sharp changes (on this, see all the "nonsense" in *The Third International After Lenin*). Now these sharp changes indicate precisely that the "relationship of forces" is not only extremely difficult to measure, but also constantly shifting, often within the space of a few days. This ought to inspire us all to first undertake some sound theoretical studies in order to be better qualified to engage in the very complicated exercises and the tight-rope walking so often required by tactics in the present epoch. Our party must devote a large part of its effort to "patiently explaining" the situation to the masses, and it can do this only if it holds with all its strength to the program; tactics must flow from the latter, and not be determined as a function of a "relationship of forces" deduced from the impressions of a day or sucked from one's thumb.

* * *

The position on the referendum expressed by Comrade Demazière can be summed up almost literally as follows: I don't give a hang about what is in the constitution; I don't give a hang about tri-partyism in the government; I consider that the tri-party coalition has been broken in Parliament, and we must act in accordance with this break; in the battle which the bourgeoisie is opening up, we must place ourselves at the side of the workers' parties; this is the first time in a long while that we have really had a chance to make a united front with them; the defeat of the workers' parties in the referendum would be a defeat of the working class; the working class is confused, as it was before Hitler came to power in 1933; if the constitution does not win out, the confusion will become still greater.

First of all we wish to remark that neither the content of the constitution — from a theoretical point of view —, nor what goes on in the government, — from a tactical point of view —, can be a matter of indifference to us.

The content of a constitution which sanctifies, among other things, capitalist property, national defense under a capitalist regime, and colonial domination, cannot be overlooked under the false excuse of the "relationship of forces." From the very beginning, our propaganda should have explained our opposition to such a constitution, and should have set up in opposition to it a constitution based on Councils; a *propaganda approach of this kind could have aided us greatly in explaining our transitional program*. On a principled basis it is impossible to justify voting for the constitution, even if the MRP should bloc with the PRL and the Radicals against it. Here I would like to give an example of a principled position taken by Trotsky in circumstances quite as serious as the May 5 referendum. On September 18, 1937, at the time of the war in Spain, Shachtman, who was then a member of the Fourth International, wrote to Trotsky as follows:

"You say, 'If we would have a member in the Cortes he would vote *against* the military budget of Negrin...' If, as we all contend, *the element of an imperialist war* is not dominant at the present time in the Spanish struggle, and if instead the decisive element is still the struggle between the decaying bourgeois democracy... and fascism... and if we are obliged to give military assistance to the struggle against fascism, we don't see how it would be possible to vote in the Cortes against the military budget... If a Bolshevik-Leninist on the Huesca front were asked by a Socialist comrade why his representative in the Cortes voted against the proposal by Negrin to devote a million pesetas to the purchase of rifles for the front, what would this Bolshevik-Leninist reply?"

Two days later the Bolshevik-Leninist Trotsky answered Shachtman: "To vote the military budget of the Negrin government means to vote him *political* confidence... To do it would be a crime. How shall we explain our vote?... Very simply: We have not the slightest confidence in the capacity of this government to conduct the war and to assure victory. We accuse this government of protecting the rich and starving the poor. This government must be smashed. So long as we are not strong enough to replace it, we are fighting under its command. But on every occasion we openly express our non-confidence in it: it is the only one possibility to mobilize the masses *politically* against this government and to prepare its overthrow. Any other politics would be a betrayal of the revolution."

If in the course of the Spanish civil war voting for military credits to the Negrin government which was engaged in armed struggle against Franco meant a vote of political confidence which Trotsky considered a betrayal, then voting for a bourgeois constitution when there is only a parliamentary division between parties which continue to have an understanding with each other in the government, would have a political significance to which the word "betrayal" would be all the more applicable; we would be abandoning all the principles on which our national and international organization rests and we would shamefully and monstrously discredit our organization.

Do you think that our English comrades, for example, could scornfully disregard the content of some law proposed by the Labor Government, simply because it aroused the opposition of the conservatives and liberals? This oversimplified way of determining policy, at the expense of our

basic conceptions, is closely related to the methods honored by the Social Democrats, particularly the left Social-Democrats, every time they have to justify a capitulation: it is not the content which is important, but the fact that the reaction opposes it. This method — if it can be called a method — has nothing in common with Marxism: it is the open door to betrayal pure and simple.

We must not cut ourselves off from the masses, they tell us. But what masses? We are the French section of the Fourth International; we cannot, under the pretext that we would cut ourselves off from the French masses (which furthermore we deny), go against the masses of other countries. By voting *yes* on a constitution which sanctifies the "French Union," we place ourselves alongside the hangmen and against the oppressed masses of Indo-China and North Africa who are struggling — even to the point of armed revolt — against the French Union. At a time when our press points out the contradictory positions of the social-patriotic Stalinist parties in various countries (Italy-Yugoslavia; France-Germany), how can we, under the guise of tactics and the "relationship of forces," take up an opposite position from the position of the Bolshevik-Leninists in the colonies oppressed by French imperialism? We blush with shame to see where this playing with questions of principle leads us.

* * *

We could stop here, but it would really be a pity not to bring up all of Comrade Demazière's arguments, which have as little consistency in dealing with tactics as they have theoretical basis.

Instead of scornfully disregarding what is going on in the government and considering that the essential thing is the break-up of tri-partyism in Parliament, it would be more pertinent to ask what this changed relationship of the parties in the government and the Assembly means. It is clear that the MRP has no intention of leaving the government, and that neither Gouin nor the Socialist or Stalinist leaders want to kick them out; otherwise the government crisis would be an open one. In the entire polemic that has been going on in the press, the newspapers of both sides cover up this question of the government. Our right-wingers do just the same in our discussions. Actually, there is every reason to believe that the government is assailed by grave difficulties, — chiefly financial problems, and also probably certain political situations bound up on the one hand with the dollar loan,* and on the other hand, with pressure from the USSR. But these gentlemen do not want to and cannot pose these questions openly. They cannot live comfortably together — but only with even greater difficulty can they separate. Actually, their antagonistic class bases make their cohabitation in the government very risky; but a break and an open fight would have dangerous consequences for the maintenance of their social order. That is why they are all of them compelled to settle their disagreements on the side, to conduct their conflicts on narrow grounds which offer no opening for the class struggle. Under such circumstances, what better ground than a conflict over what to do with the draft of a constitution?

We may say that these swindlers have agreed to disagree. At the same time, the fight over the referendum

* See a reference to this in Gouin's speech for the constitution.

serves as a preliminary round for the June 2 elections: the MRP trying, by its "no," to reduce its losses to the PRL on the right; the SP, by its "yes," trying to counteract the disruptive maneuvers of the Stalinists.

In Parliament, there is a division; in the government, they continue their agreement. We must denounce this comedy, precisely in order to drive for the break-up of tri-partyism. Out with the MRP ministers! Forward to a SP-CP-CGT Government! These are the slogans we must emphasize at the present time. The MRP is attempting blackmail, trying to get further concessions. This is no reason to vote for the constitution which is the crowning point of tri-party politics; *this should be the occasion for picking out the MRP ministers, as well as the constitution which was drawn up in collaboration with them.*

A *yes* vote — far from contributing to the break-up, far from spreading among the masses a distrust of the treacherous policies of their leaderships — would do nothing but blur over the criticism we could make; and in the eyes of the advanced workers of the whole world — who, after all, are not to be forgotten —, in the eyes of the colonial peoples and of the great numbers of workers who take the trouble to reflect, our criticism would appear as a shameful alibi for capitulating before the new campaign of the Stalinists. Instead of explaining that the fight over "yes" or "no" is a phony fight which does not threaten the fundamental interests of the bourgeoisie, we are to play a few notes of counterpoint on our little flute in the Stalinist-Socialist grand orchestra, which is already deafening us with the noble music of the Republic, of the Fatherland, of stability and threatened law and order!

It is quite true that the bourgeoisie and its servants and accomplices have no way of determining exactly how far their battle-comedy can go or where it must stop; it is quite true that in operations of this sort, there may be fake maneuvers on one side or the other; it is possible that their mutual blackmail may end with a break-up in the government; but even in this case, it is clear that the superior reasons of security of the regime will impel them to find a new formula for compromise. The best way for us to put a stick in the spokes is not to drag on blindly after the workers' parties, with a few verbal remarks intended to placate the corner of one's mind where a few ideas of Marxist theory have been stuck away — but to denounce the maneuverist and artificial character of the struggle, and call upon the workers to intervene and carry it to another plane.

In vain have we searched the arguments of the "yes" supporters for proof that through such participation we could help to lead the masses beyond the framework of parliamentarism. Both sides chose this terrain because the results would be harmless. The reaction can accommodate itself to the constitution very nicely; there are quite enough provisions in its favor. As for the workers' parties, they make all the more noise in proportion as they do not really want to lead the struggle against the bourgeoisie. On the question of breaking out of the parliamentary framework, Comrade Soudran made the only attempt to argue the point. According to him, parliamentary struggles are always linked to, and in a certain degree reflect, extra-parliamentary struggles; and he mentioned the elections and the general strike of 1936. Very well. But since when does this mean that we should have voted with the Popular Front in order to

encourage the strike movement of June 1936? On the contrary, the Popular Front was the bourgeoisie's best method for checking the offensive of the workers.

In connection with this, the error of our right-wingers is linked up with their erroneous conception of the SP-CP-CGT slogan. They give it a parliamentary significance; they see in it above all a combination resting on a parliamentary majority, on the program of these parties and within the framework of democracy — instead of taking it as a slogan for mobilizing the masses, as the crowning point of a united front policy of class against class, which passes beyond bourgeois legality. In this quarrel over the Constituent, we have only a "democratic" combination of the SP, the CP and the CGT, on an anti-working class program — a combination which is bound to lead the discontent of the masses into an impasse. Our position on this can be no other than the position outlined in the "Transitional Program" on this kind of "democratic" workers' and farmers' government:

"The slogan, 'workers' and farmers' government,' is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e., as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that 'democratic' sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to the socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path."

Voting "yes" for the Constitution of the CP-SP-CGT does not constitute a bridge leading the masses to the socialist revolution, but an obstacle in their way. To associate ourselves with this is certainly one of the most disastrous errors that a section of the Fourth International could commit.

* * *

Whether it is only a phony battle, conducted on a juridical plane as part of the election maneuvers, or whether for some unusual reason it develops into a real fight, would you please explain to us in what way voting "yes" puts us in a united front with the workers' parties? This argument of Demazière has no more basis than the others. Let him carefully re-read certain pages which Trotsky wrote at the time of the rise of Hitlerism in Germany. As a fraction of the CP at that time, we supported the candidacy of Thaelmann and were against running any candidate jointly with the Social Democrats because *that was not a united front*, because that was not the way to bar the road to the Nazis. On the question of elections the tradition of the Marxist movement, and more generally of the workers' movement, is to call upon the workers to declare and affirm themselves for the revolutionary program. The fantastic conception of a united front at the polls would imply not only voting "yes" on May 5, but also eliminating all our own candidates in any cases where we might cause the election of bourgeois candidates over workers' party candidates; and we should also have to declare ourselves for the joint SP-CP lists; in fact, we would become an appendage of the Stalinists or of those in the SP who support them. Comrade Geoffroy, quite logically, would have liked us to propose a joint campaign with the SP and the CP on the referendum. Demazière and those who voted with him should be consistent with their own positions; if it is correct for May 5, why not also for June 2? If we run candidates, they will not take votes away from the PRL or the MRP, but from

the workers' parties; this is a way of "dividing" the workers — it is the way to divide them from a policy of class collaboration and win them to a policy of class struggle.

The united front means above all an effective struggle for a specific objective, with effective means against a common enemy: thus it must serve to strengthen us at the expense of the treacherous leaderships. An electoral struggle is a propaganda campaign — marking out our program, and thereby marking out, above all, the other parties of the working class, even at the risk of benefiting a bourgeois candidate.

Let us add finally that when there was a choice of candidates on the ballot, we never withdrew our candidates in the name of the "united front." When we did withdraw, we said to the workers: between our program and that of the party which the majority of you follow there is irreconcilable opposition: but we do not want to stand in the way of your experience with the party we are denouncing, we want to help you go through this experience, and that is why we are withdrawing in favor of their candidate.

If in a case where we have no candidate we vote for the candidate of a workers' party, it is not because of a united front; we do so independently of the program supported by that party and that candidate.

Similarly, when our English comrades have called for support of LP candidates, and our American comrades support a working-class candidate against a candidate of the bourgeois parties, they have never spoken of this as a united front. We regret that we cannot put up our own candidate, we set forth our own program in the campaign, and voting for a working-class candidate is simply the very limited opportunity we have, under the circumstances, of marking out the class line.

But to vote *yes* on May 5 is perhaps to make a certain kind of "united front" with the large workers' parties — a united front of class-collaboration, not a united front of struggle in the interests of the working class.

* * *

The last part of Comrade Demazière's argument touches upon our whole analysis of the present period and perspectives. His comparison with Germany in 1933 throws light upon some extremely wide differences in our estimate of the situation. Let us note first of all that Demazière arbitrarily detaches from the over-all situation, the temporary confusion of the working masses of France, who have accumulated almost two years of deceptions. The bourgeoisie has regained a little assurance and self-confidence. But that is a long way from talking of a general offensive. If Demazière would measure the "relationship of forces" not on a national scale — one might almost say on a parliamentary scale — but on an international scale, he would be more cautious on matters of "confusion," "defeat of the working class," and "a general offensive of the bourgeoisie." Let us look at an instructive example. Two months ago the workers' parties in Belgium suffered a serious electoral defeat. The Social-Christian party and the Liberals obtained a clear parliamentary majority; nevertheless, from that day till now, in all the long negotiations of the tangled crisis, there has not for a moment been any question of a government based on this majority. *The Belgian bourgeoisie,*

victorious in the elections, is still constrained to call for the cooperation of the Socialists and the Stalinists in the government and to keep the Social-Christian party in the opposition.

The real relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat — on an international scale — IS VERY FAVORABLE TO THE PROLETARIAT, in spite of the weakness of the revolutionary party. This is particularly true in Europe, now that the Hitler party has been destroyed, the Tory party swept away, and American imperialism is having to face vast social movements (strikes, soldier-demonstrations. . .). Capitalism maintains itself thanks only to the brake which the apparatus of the Stalinist and Socialist parties puts upon the working class. In other articles we will examine the bases of Stalinism, particularly those aspects which make it possible for us to estimate its real strength. It is true that to answer this question one has to go into the "nonsense" of Marx and not simply rely upon one's impressions of an extremely unstable period.)

Properly speaking, there is no general offensive of capitalism. The situation cannot be expressed in a simple formula. French capitalism, for example, two years after the "liberation," is still much more cautious than it was in the year following the June 1936 strikes. For the moment, it is satisfied to profit from the scuttling of the workers' demands by the treacherous leaderships. It is extremely cautious in the factories, leaving it up to the trade union apparatus to increase production. It has only begun to group its forces in the PRL, and does no more than feel out the ground; obviously this initial weakness should be exploited in order to prevent development and consolidation. Capitalism knows better than we do that a sudden brutal provocation at the present moment would very probably act as a whip to awaken the fighting spirit of the masses. And so it enters into this comedy which will add still another deception of the masses. What will a *yes* victory bring? What would its consequences be? It seems that plenty of patience will be needed if we are to wait for an answer to these questions from our right-wingers.

But, they object, a *no* victory will increase the confusion of the working class and lead to a retreat of the workers' parties in the June 2 elections. To say this is to attribute to the masses — who have, to be sure, numerous democratic illusions — a notary's eyesight, which they certainly don't have. The proletarian masses have illusions about what a majority in a bourgeois parliament can do; but they don't make a superstition out of written documents, and the Socialist and Stalinist parties will have to spend far more effort to get the masses to believe that adopting some document or other is an essential stake in the struggle between the Socialist-Stalinist parties and the reaction for the bulk of the workers' votes on June 2. The working masses understand, in a confused way perhaps, but with a sure class instinct, what Lassalle in 1862 so brilliantly demonstrated, in a speech in Berlin on the essence of constitutions. Here is what he said:

"Constitutional questions are first and foremost not questions of right, but of force; the actual constitution of a nation lies in the real, actual relation of forces existing there; written constitutions are valid and stable only when

they correctly express the actual relation of forces in a society. . . Remember this speech well, gentlemen, and you will know, if ever again you are put in a position where you yourselves can draft a constitution, how to go about it and how the task is really accomplished only through the changing of the actual relation of forces and not through the filling up of a sheet of paper."

In general one must be cautious with Lassalle's theoretical writings, but this one is the kind of "nonsense" we can accept without hesitation. Altogether apart from any question of principle, we should reject the constitution all the more firmly *because it does not correspond to the actual relation of forces.*

The referendum of October 1945 — a real plebiscite — showed that there was no close correspondence between the results of the referendum and of the elections held the same day. To say that a "no" majority would result in a retreat of the workers' parties is to say something that the workers' parties themselves refrain from stating. One would think rather that a "no" majority would jolt the masses into electing on June 2 a stronger and solidier majority, which would be able to create better living conditions.

The May 5 referendum is fundamentally nothing more than a paper battle; the majority of the CC has let itself be taken in, under the pretext of the "relationship of forces" between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, when actually it was terrified by the relationship of forces between the Stalinist party and us — a relationship which, it seems to us, they have measured as a function of the avalanche of columns in *l'Humanite*, rather than in a really objective manner. How otherwise can we understand the fact that some comrades seriously say that voting *yes* on nationalisations with indemnities really means voting *yes* on nationalisations without compensation or indemnities?

Returning briefly to the offensive of the bourgeoisie, the confusion of the masses, the analogy with Germany in the period before Hitler's coming to power — all these things which so torment the days and nights of Comrade Demazière — we advise him to reread very carefully what Trotsky wrote from 1929 to 1933 in the period of the Nazis' rise to power. He will see how even in the last year Trotsky still considered the fascists "human scum"; how Trotsky, citing figures, showed that parallel with the rise of fascism there occurred the beginnings of radicalization among the laboring masses, that the slowness of this process was due chiefly to the policy of the CP, and that a real struggle could in a very short time alter from top to bottom the relationship of forces — *and this only a few days before Hitler came to power.* It would be childish to deny that the present situation is full of danger for the working class, that the continuation of this state of lethargy gives the bourgeoisie time, which it uses for gathering its forces together again. But if on the very eve of the Nazi triumph nothing was hopelessly lost and everything could be still regained — and Trotsky did not make gratuitous statements — and if at that time we denounced those who had capitulated in advance, there is all the more reason today for denouncing those who do nothing but groan over the retreats of the workers, in a period in which the working masses of Europe and of the entire world have built up

than ten years and the heaviest of defeats to dissipate.

The confusion of which certain comrades speak is of the most superficial sort among the masses, but the confusion of these comrades, arising out of our always-too-slow progress compared with the growth of Stalinism — this confusion, I say, is so profound that they are about to break away from their anchorage in the Marxist program, without which our organization would cease to exist. The right wing has spoken of "party suicide" if the party declared itself against the bourgeois constitution. In reality, the *yes* vote decided upon by the Central Committee is a serious blow to the vitality of the PCI. The internal situation calls for vigorous correction. This is possible only through intensive political clarification. The May 5 referendum is only a small problem compared with what is in store for us in the near

revealed itself on this occasion. This gives us a certain time to remedy it. We will try to make the best use of this time.

April 25, 1946.

P. S. I want to make very clear what I said at the last CC. I was and still am for voting *no* in the referendum, a position which, at the CC meeting early in April, was held only by Comrade Deschamps and myself. This position seems to me to be the clearest and the easiest to explain. But since other comrades preferred to mark their vote against the constitution by writing-in a political declaration on the ballot, I see nothing wrong in coming to an understanding with them on this point, since there is no difference on the general analysis and the political position to be adopted.

The Meaning of the Referendum in the Present Situation

By SOUDRAN

(Member of the Minority of the CC of the PCI)

1. Since the liberation, the bourgeoisie has succeeded in liquidating a number of gains won by the proletariat ("patriotic" militias, management committees). It has succeeded in constantly battering down still further the purchasing power of the laboring masses and imposing heavier and heavier sacrifices on them, without succeeding, however, in putting its own shattered economy back on its feet.

The essential feature of this situation is that the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the CGT bureaucracy have taken upon themselves responsibility for this policy. The traditional workers' parties have carried out a policy of class collaboration which, in the most recent stage, took the special form of tri-partyism.

The possibility of the SP, CP, and CGT taking responsibility for the interests of the bourgeoisie rests fundamentally on the leftward movement of the masses and their continuing confidence in the traditional leaderships, and also, of course, on the betrayal of the latter.

To the vain attempt to establish a "social and progressive democracy," history opposes the following alternative: bourgeois dictatorship or proletarian dictatorship.

2. The bourgeoisie cannot in the long run be satisfied with the services of the treacherous workers' parties.

The Communist Party, an instrument of Soviet diplomacy, is an unreliable ally and is particularly opposed to the "western bloc," the great dream of the bourgeoisie.

The Socialist Party, which represents the pro-American side of the bourgeoisie's policy, is in danger of losing influence to such an extent that it might cease to be the necessary pivot for the continuation of the present arrangement.

To this may be added the fact that the betrayal of the workers' parties is not positive assurance against a revolt of the working class and growth of the revolutionary movement.

3. Thus the political goal of the bourgeoisie continues to be the establishment of a dictatorship which will smash

the workers' rights, in order to attempt a recovery on the backs of the laboring masses.

But at the present moment capitalism does not yet have the strength to go in for this policy all the way.

For the present its political struggle remains confined within the parliamentary field. Opposition to the constitution gives the bourgeoisie the opportunity to count up and regroup its forces.

It carries out this policy while maintaining in every way possible the governmental collaboration which furthers the betrayal by the workers' parties, gives the bourgeoisie the opportunity for constant blackmail and, finally, throws discredit upon the workers' parties and even upon "democracy" in general.

The fact that the bureaucracies of the workers' parties and the unions keep the workers in a passive attitude, contributes still more to limiting the struggle *at present* to the constitutional and parliamentary plane.

4. The political offensive of the bourgeoisie aims, in the next stage, to reach the following objectives:

a) The defeat of the workers' parties in the referendum.

b) The resurrection of the Senate.

c) Above all, the establishing of a strong presidential power.

It is on this basis that the regroupment of the bourgeois parties is taking place.

5. But whether one likes it or not, the division of France into two socially opposed camps, even on the question of the bourgeois constitution, opens up a political crisis which the "sessions of national unanimity" cannot succeed in masking.

This political crisis can henceforth only deepen. At the present stage the initiative is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Disarmed by a leadership which halts at the impossible "democratic progressive" stage, the proletariat is fighting in retreat. But it is by no means crushed; it has not lost any decisive battle.

6. In the absence of a revolutionary movement, defeat of the workers' parties on the referendum before a bourgeois offensive on this question, would be a real defeat for the working class.

It would mean the establishing of a strong presidential power, a very convenient legal instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie for preparing the dictatorship.

The situation would be entirely different if there were a revolutionary advance of the workers, expressing itself through committees and guided by a recognized internationalist communist party in the vanguard.

But at the present time the forces are taking each other's measure, and the battle around the constitution is only a pretext for a test of strength which is still peaceful now but a prelude to the inevitable struggles of tomorrow.

7. Under these conditions the PCI has a double task:

1) to put a halt to the provocations of the bourgeoisie,

2) at the same time, through its agitation to prepare the proletariat for going over to the offensive.

Our propaganda must revolve around the following two essential points:

1) Rejection of the constitution — even though a bourgeois constitution — which has been presented by the SP and CP, would be a setback for the working class and a victory for reaction, and this is the *only* reason we call upon you to vote "YES."

2) Actually, the adoption of this constitution solves no problems — and for the following reasons:

a) This is a bourgeois constitution (private property and the fundamental bourgeois institutions remain: police, law courts, government bureaucracy).

b) Have no illusions in voting for the constitution, because the policy of the bourgeoisie will continue to be to starve the workers. And isn't this policy being carried out by the SP, CP, and CGT themselves?

c) If the reaction is defeated this time on the question of the referendum, it will continue its policy of blackmail in the government, with the support of the workers' parties which permit this maneuver, and it will take up the struggle in another field, as in 1934. . .

9. The "YES" position on the referendum is only one side of our policy; but it makes it possible for us to help the workers understand how to prepare their offensive, which is the only way of *decisively* eliminating the danger of bourgeois provocations and maneuvers such as we are witnessing.

Through our propaganda and agitation we can thus call upon the masses to defend their *demands* by mobilizing their forces and taking up again their traditional weapons of struggle: strikes and occupying the factories.

The renewal of this offensive is carried through with the following two chief slogans:

"The workers will fight to win their demands as they did in 1936."

"An end to the provocations of the bourgeoisie."

10. The slogan of breaking the coalition takes on new significance precisely when we explain our reasons for voting "YES."

In our agitation the "YES" vote must be given the following significance:

"No collaboration with the bourgeois provocateurs."

"Renewal of the struggle for improving the lot of the workers, and real reforms of the structure." (Cf. our program and resolution of the last CC meeting.)

11. A certain nervousness reveals itself at present among the masses, and it only depends on us to transform this into revolutionary will, provided we know how to start from their essential concerns, which are to halt the reaction, improve their lot, and find a clear way out of the morass.

The demagogic promises of the bourgeoisie and its social-treacherous agents find fewer and fewer echoes within the working class. We cannot be satisfied indefinitely with opposing to the false slogans of the Social Democrats the correct slogans of the PCI. From now on, we must show the masses the road to power. And we must do this immediately, explaining concretely that the road to proletarian power lies through the establishing of workers' control at every level, through committees, through extension of the powers of the committees and transformation of these powers into political power.

April 25, 1946.

Sources of Errors

By G. HIRT

Not only the majority of the French section, but also those who criticise it correctly pose the question inadequately and their method of approach is inadequate. They all consider the struggle around the constitution in an isolated manner, instead of *examining it first of all from the point of view of all its relationships*, its relationship to the entire class struggle in France, from the international as well as the national point of view. In order to define the tactic in the French constitutional struggle in a correct way, we must first pose the following question and answer it: what *strategy* does the French situation impose on us, of course within the framework of proletarian-revolutionary *principles*?

Where is France going today, nationally and internationally?

I. The Perspectives of the French Bourgeoisie

Internationally: The French bourgeoisie lost the war; it can reestablish itself only on the backs of the masses; and cannot even do this today except with the aid of the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie. The latter does in effect offer its assistance—principally in the form of a loan of billions—and demands in exchange the alignment of France in the united front of all the imperialisms against the Soviet Union. The French bourgeoisie is ready to pay this price, because

in the present situation this constitutes the only road for the preservation of its class power and profits at the expense of the French masses.

Nationally: In order to reestablish itself at the expense of the masses, the bourgeoisie *must*, in the last analysis, orient itself toward establishing an open capitalist dictatorship. For in their totality, the gigantic sacrifices which the French bourgeoisie requires for its reestablishment cannot in the long run be imposed on the masses, shattered by the first six years of war, solely by the methods of bourgeois democracy. The objective logic of its struggle pushes the French bourgeoisie in this direction, its directing layer, monopoly capitalism, sees this clearly and deduces capitalist strategy and tactics from it.

We would be at fault if we could see the offensive of the capitalist *coup d'etat* only when it will develop openly, instead of recognizing it in its first steps, and fighting against it immediately, from its very beginnings, clearly, consciously and methodically.

The monopoly capitalist leadership of the French bourgeoisie is conscious first and foremost that it can further its strategical plan only by a *series of tactical stages*. It sees even more clearly that its strategical goal demands a tactical line, and that this line must serve for as long as possible and must assure them victory in the end under the best conditions.

To separate the SFIO from its alliance with the Stalinist party, to isolate the Stalinists, this is the *goal of the first, tactical stage* of the French capitalist class. With the lever of a loan of billions, the bourgeoisie of the USA pushes it in the same direction.

In no case will this process of passing from capitalist dictatorship, hidden by a democratic veil, over to the open form last as long as it did in Germany after the first world war, when this process, after the preparations of 1918-23, dragged on for ten more years. The crisis of the capitalist system has considerably deepened, deepens more and more; a new crisis of world economy is on the way, much greater, much more terrible than that of 1929. Only the completion of the second imperialist world war, not yet ended, only the war of all the imperialisms against the Soviet Union can again increase the capitalist margin of profit to some slight extent. The imperialist bandits of the US and England cannot too long postpone this final scene, their plan is to have it "played" in their behalf primarily by "democratized" Germany and Japan (democratized in the capitalist manner). In no case can they wait twenty-one years as they did from 1918 to 1939. The past six years of the second imperialist world war have only sharpened the crisis of the capitalist system. These factors, inexorably shortening the periods of action for the world bourgeoisie, also push the French bourgeoisie to conduct its offensive within a brief period. *In this sense*, the strategical offensive of the French capitalist class, directed toward the establishment of an open bourgeois dictatorship is a *short term danger*.

II. The Perspective of the French Bureaucracy and Workers' Aristocracy

What strategy is opposed to the strategical offensive of the bourgeoisie by these degenerated and bourgeoisified

layers—of which the CP and the SFIO are the political organizations and the trade union bureaucracy the transmission belt into the CGT? They fear the revolutionary proletariat even more than the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie; the proletarian revolution even more than the capitalist counter-revolution. Because of that, they had the revolutionary workers of the Resistance disarmed. And it is because of that, that they left the essence of the capitalist state apparatus intact, that they allowed the continuation of capitalist property in the basic sectors of production. They simply changed its form. They replaced the property of individual capitalists or groups of individual capitalists with the property of *capitalists as a class*, concentrated and centralized by the bourgeois state, and presented this to the masses as "socialism" or as the "road to socialism." All this was done to keep the masses behind them, to continue to live as parasites on their backs, in order to use the fighting power of the masses to obtain material gains for themselves, thereby continuing their work as agents of the bourgeoisie.

Of course the petty bourgeoisie of the bureaucracy and the workers' aristocracy want to keep their "share of (capitalist) power," their "share of the (capitalist) pot." They seek, then, to maintain their *petty-bourgeois* position by *petty-bourgeois* methods. It is primarily as a function of this that this petty-bourgeois layer conducts the struggle about the constitution. Without doubt the capitalist and democratic constitution which was passed in the Constituent and put to a vote on May 5, was on the whole, in comparison to the (democratic-bourgeois) constitution of 1875, a step forward (principally by the elimination of the Senate and the prerogatives of the president). Insofar as decisions which are only scraps of paper can in general have any effectiveness, the bourgeois-democratic constitution of May 1946 opposed stronger obstacles than the constitution of 1875 to the offensive of the French bourgeoisie, which was preparing to discard bourgeois democracy and establish an open bourgeois dictatorship.

For the CP, the French offspring of Stalino-Russian nationalism, it was above all a question of amassing the strongest possible obstacles (on paper), by this way (petty-bourgeois-democratic), against an alignment of capitalist France in the front of all the imperialisms against the Soviet Union.

The bureaucrats and degenerated worker aristocrats are incapable of understanding that the final victory of the capitalist counter-revolution cannot possibly be halted by a policy of coalition, by a national front, by a "popular" front, by collaboration with the bourgeoisie or with its parties, by a policy contained within the narrow national framework, in short, by a reformist policy. Otherwise they would have to stop being what they are from the class point of view: petty-bourgeois. Even the decisive experiences in Germany, Austria, Spain, and France (1936-39) change nothing, for the policies of these layers are a result of these petty-bourgeois interests. And these interests permit only this petty-bourgeois policy to the bureaucracy and to the workers' aristocracy as a "mass," although it goes against all the teachings of theory and all the experiences of history.

III. The Perspectives of the French Working Class

The French proletariat must fight against the alignment of France in a common front with all the imperialisms against the Soviet Union. The French proletariat must fight against the counter-revolutionary economic and political offensive that the French bourgeoisie is conducting against its vital interests, against raising its standard of living and against the political liberties of the masses. Every French worker understands that and is strongly aware of it. But the great mass of workers does not yet understand the development of the class struggle in France in its entirety, the masses are not yet conscious of the goal which they must set for their struggle, of the road on which they must conduct it, of the methods of struggle and the only goal which can bring them out of the abyss. The masses do not as yet see their class goal and the road which leads to it, because they are not yet conscious from the class point of view. The tactics of a proletarian revolutionist should help them to attain, at all costs, consciousness of their class interests, of their fundamental interests, and lead them into action. They still believe the phrases of the bureaucracy and the workers' aristocracy; they still continue to fight under the leadership of the CP, the SFIO, and the trade union bureaucracy.

It is for this reason that the proletarian party should have shown the French masses the *central point* of the struggle about the constitution! This means that it had to explain to them the *role of this partial struggle in its general strategic relations*, and all this as a function of the present class struggle in France. It had to explain to them why the bourgeoisie was against the constitution; had to show them that the struggle against this constitution was for the French bourgeoisie a means of introducing the first turn, the first tactical stage of its counter-revolutionary strategical offensive, the goal of which was to separate the SFIO from the CP; to isolate the Stalino-Russian party. The revolutionary party must make the masses understand that even though this constitution sets up stronger (bourgeois-democratic-paper) guarantees against capitalist revolution through the use of democratic petty-bourgeois means, the counter-revolution can be averted and beaten solely and exclusively by a democratic-proletarian, revolutionary-proletarian policy, strategy, and tactic.

That they have neglected to do this is the *fundamental error common* to both the majority of the French section as well as their critics. But starting off from the same inadequate basis, making use of the same inadequate method (an isolated and abstract estimate of the constitutional struggle, in a word: *a doctrinaire approach to this question*) these three opinions nevertheless contain important *differences*.

a) According to the opinion of the *majority*, the referendum was transformed, from the moment the bourgeois MRP refused to support the constitution, into a "test of strength between the *bourgeois parties* and the *workers' parties*," that is to say, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. A fundamental mistake with serious consequences. The social-democratic, Stalinist, and labor parties call themselves workers' parties, but they are not! They are

petty-bourgeois parties: parties of the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisified workers' aristocracy who live as political parasites on the fighting strength of the masses whom they exploit for the petty-bourgeois interests of the degenerated layer. In this way these parties, by the results of their policy, are always in the last analysis serving the cause of the bourgeoisie. Insofar as the CP, the SFIO, and the trade union bureaucracy are concerned, this struggle about the constitution was, and is, only a *struggle between the bourgeoisified workers' aristocracy - bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie*. Of course the workers are participating in this struggle, but, for the moment, not under the banner of their class interests nor for their own class interests, but as a tail of the bureaucracy and the workers' aristocracy, and for the petty-bourgeois interests of these people.

The serious opportunist error of the majority, which simply issued the slogan "Yes" on the constitution, was caused by the failure to recognize the petty-bourgeois class character of the CP and the SFIO. Similarly, this majority issued the slogan, "For an SP-CP-CGT Government," without tying this transitional slogan to necessary and indispensable revolutionary propagandistic criticism, showing, in general, an opportunistic lack of clarity, if not a fundamentally opportunistic position). Even more significant is their agitation for capitalist nationalization without opposing to it the central transitional slogan of workers' control of production, and, without tying the two slogans together by revolutionary criticism and propaganda.

b) In opposition to this, the *minority* of the French section offered the correct slogan—correct in relation to the proximity of the danger of boycott—of writing-in on blank ballots the inscription "For a Workers' and Peasants' Government" (it would have been clearer: For a Workers' and Small Peasants' Government) by which, apparently, indispensable revolutionary propaganda and criticism were implied. The minority furnished the proof that one can in exceptional cases find a correct position, even by starting from an inadequate hypothesis, even by working with an inadequate method, when one is guided by a revolutionary instinct. But the minority must not be content with having taken a position in this way, because it presents dangers for the future. We must always start off from correct, concrete conditions, always start off from correct evaluations of the concrete general situation and its perspectives, and we must base our strategy and tactics upon these: in this way we show the masses not only the correct path in the present situation, but we also illuminate the road ahead, we thus facilitate the struggle to come, we already prepare for it today—only in this way do we *effectively* fulfill the *leading* role of the party. The minority must improve the inadequate explanation of its correct tactical slogan.

c) The weakness of the *third* opinion consisted in the fact that it was content to take an *exclusively* negative position, something that must be avoided at any cost. If it had also taken a positive position, it would have naturally indicated the role that the struggle round the constitution played in the framework of the general concrete struggle, and it would also naturally have found that the strategic task before which we find ourselves in the *present* conditions in France is none other than this: *Against the opening of-*

jenrive of the bourgeois coup d'etat, we call for defense of the vital interests of the masses and improvement of their living conditions, defense of bourgeois democracy, and all of this consistently tied to revolutionary criticism of bourgeois democracy; tied to consistent preparation for the revolutionary counter-offensive of the masses against the bourgeoisie.

It was precisely Comrade Trotsky who elaborated with the greatest clarity the necessary revolutionary tactic having this as objective during the long years of struggle against the national "socialist" offensive up to the year 1933. He did it above all against those who, in an honest but doctrinaire way, were content to reject bourgeois democracy in principle *only in words*, and to preach the rule of proletarian democracy; the masses could in no case be mobilized for the revolution by such methods.

It is completely correct that we reject capitalist democracy in principle. But in order effectively to *realize* this principled rejection, it is imperative that we do not lose sight of the fact that our conditions of *fundamental* struggle (that is to say, our general tasks of the struggle) are never *in reality* given in themselves and for themselves, but are always posed in indissoluble relation with the concrete conditions and tasks of the struggle on each occasion, and consequently they must be resolved *solely* in the light of the living whole relationship of the given general situation, at the given moment, *solely in these concrete total relations*, in order that they may in this way be resolved in a correct way, in a revolutionary way. Any other method is doctrinaireism, any other method merely plays with principles in words, however honest the intentions. It does not realize principles in *living practice* but does realize—even when the intentions are honest—the exact *contrary*. The most important of these concrete conditions of struggle is, today, the concrete height of consciousness, the exact depth of consciousness of the masses. In the conditions of the present concrete struggle in France, the only road, the "rejection in principle" of the capitalist and democratic constitution and of bourgeois democracy in general, did not consist in practice simply of words but of the following things:

1) We must act in such a way that we do not sacrifice this small advantage (on paper) of the May 1946 constitution, which in the consciousness of the masses had the illusory appearance of a real and immense advantage, but together with them we ought to defend it; but at the same time we should, secondly, have patiently explained to the masses by revolutionary criticism the fundamental inadequacies of every bourgeois democracy, and above all the fundamental impossibility of defeating the offensive of the capitalist coup d'etat, of defeating the counter-revolution of the bourgeoisie from the point of view of capitalist democracy in the epoch of the growing decadence of capitalism; and all this we should have.

2) Tied to constant revolutionary propaganda and organization for the democratic-proletarian revolution, for the establishment of the rule of the proletarian democracy of the workers, white-collar workers, petty functionaries, small peasants, petty-bourgeoisie, of this immense popular majority under the leadership of the working class, that is to say, for the government of workers and small peasants.

Solely in this manner would we have mobilized the masses in the given concrete conditions along the road of "rejection in principle of bourgeois democracy," by revolutionary action, for the revolutionary struggle for victory, for the final realization of the rule of proletarian democracy.

We know that the struggle for stipulations on paper of the best bourgeois-democratic constitution (on paper) has only a secondary importance. But the *masses* do not know it yet. They continue to give this struggle an immense scope because of their illusions. *To take as a point of departure* this secondary struggle meant to take as a point of departure the present low level of consciousness of the masses and meant the beginning of a progressive clarification of this consciousness, this will to struggle, this struggle of the masses, by means of our revolutionary tactic, by the masses' own experience, to raise them, to develop them and temper them in the direction of the democratic-proletarian revolution.

If examination of the general situation and its perspectives had shown that the offensive of the capitalist *coup d'etat* was only a long-term danger, then the revolutionary tactical line drawn above would have been altogether in place. In reality this danger is beginning to define itself for the *near* future. Against this danger we should have employed the boycott tactic in a suitable way tied to revolutionary criticism and propaganda about a government of workers and small peasants (even the internal situation of the party required this tactic).

At present all periods are not only in general shorter, but the tempo is, in general, more rapid than in the phase of the twenty years 1918-19 to 1938-39; at present violent changes are not only much more probable and more violent than formerly, but, above all, we are *obliged to start off from the worst variant*. At present the French bourgeoisie possesses not only its capitalist state apparatus, counter-revolutionary to the core, but, thanks to the passivity of the CP, the SFIO and the trade union bureaucracy, it already possesses today a *well-trained army for the coup d'etat*, composed of some hundreds of thousands of men in the form of French occupation troops in South Germany and Austria. As soon as the French bourgeoisie considers the time ripe, it will push the button through the intermediary of its de Gaulle (with the Anglo-Saxon bourgeoisie behind it) and this nationalist and chauvinist army will march on Paris against the French proletariat.

If our estimate of the danger as a short-term one is correct, it is possible that the masses will not understand our tactic for the moment—all the better and the more quickly will they understand us as soon as future events confirm our foresight, our warning; all the easier will it be for us to give an impetus to the masses in time to meet the capitalist *coup d'etat* offensive with a revolutionary counter-offensive.

So much for our position on May 5.

We do not know what the constitution that the masses will be called upon to vote on next time will be like. The Stalinist Party has in advance announced an immense retreat: it is for a constitution that will correspond to the wishes of "the entire people," that is to say, to those of the French bourgeoisie also! . . . We can only decide our tactic for the second referendum when we see first how this second

constitution is presented—if Russian chauvinist interests, that is to say, the power and parasitic interests of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy are satisfied, the French Stalinist offspring will be ready to jump backwards far beyond the constitution of 1875,—and second, and above all, until we can examine concretely, if during this time, the general situation is transformed in a decisive way by a

sharp international and national turn. This is not probable in view of the brief period, but it cannot be totally excluded. However the situation will present itself, we will in any case, find the correct tactic more easily if right now we examine and clarify by a *correct method*, what revolutionary tactic was necessary and appropriate for May 5. May 24, 1946

Report to the CC of the PCI

By LAMBERT

The discussion at the last PB meeting considerably clarified the problem of the referendum. The position that the party is going to take is extremely important both internally and outside the party. That is why I am convinced that the majority of the CC is not only committing a serious error, but that with this episodic problem we are touching upon a fundamental problem for Trotskyism: "How can we bring our program to life among the masses, or to put it better: starting off from the working class as it is, with the weight of Stalinism upon it, how can we bring it to our policy?"

I stood aside in the vote. In this report I will try to show how my position is tied to a complete position on the building of the party, a position in which I find myself in disagreement both with the comrades of the minority and certain comrades in the majority.

What Does the Electoral Battle of the Referendum Represent?

It is not a yes or a no for a bourgeois constitution which is posed for the masses. It suffices to discuss with any worker for only a moment to perceive clearly that in his eyes it is a coalition of bourgeois parties against the workers' parties, particularly the CP. I think that our policy must start off not from an ideal situation but from reality. That is to say, starting off from an analysis of the whole situation and its expression among the masses, the role of the party is to bring out what is healthy in the sentiments of the masses and to oppose it to the policy of betrayal of the workers' parties.

At present the workers think this way: "The situation is bad in every way, wages, food, etc. Why? Because 'our' ministers cannot carry out their program, sabotaged as they are in the government by the MRP. Let us give a huge vote in the referendum to the CP and thus we will clear the way so that it can finally carry out its program."

It is necessary to carefully analyze the reaction of the masses, and to examine how the CP utilizes what is healthy in order to better carry out its policy of class collaboration.

What the Confidence of the Masses in the CPF Means

1. When the masses think: let us give a huge vote to the CP so that it can carry out *its program*, they do not think of its program as class collaborationist, but rather as one aiming to satisfy the demands of the laboring masses. That means that our party must start off from the contra-

dition between the sentiments of the masses and the real policies of the CP. The masses want bread, for that a program for the people is necessary: sliding scale, nationalization, etc. . . . , the PCI calls upon them to struggle for this program and put in power a government of the SF and CP in order to realize it.

2. For the masses the referendum does not take place on the constitutional arena, but is a question of confidence in the CP as against the bourgeois parties, so that the former can carry out a program satisfying their demands. Obviously, the CP is making use of this confidence as a plebiscite for itself in the constitutional arena, that is to say, in an arena where it wishes to show the bourgeoisie both its own strength and the fact that the bourgeoisie cannot govern against it and without it. But the role of the revolutionary Party is precisely to oppose what is a fundamentally revolutionary expression — confidence in the CP — to the real policy of betrayal of the Stalinist bureaucrats.

The lamentations of *la Verité*, which regrets that the arena of the "battle" is that of the constitution, or the wish to escape from it by opposing to it, an ideal arena outside the perception of the masses, that of the soviet constitution, do not permit any advance. The problem consists in finding the point between the real arena of the struggle and that on which we wish to place it. For that it is necessary to start off from that which exists, and contrast the arena created by the capitulatory policies of the workers' parties with the confused will of the masses. The duty of the revolutionary party is to express clearly not the formal aspect of the answer (yes or no to the constitution), but the real content that the masses give to it (yes or no to the bourgeoisie) to the demands of the working class.

3. The CP absolutely does not want to break up tri-partyism, the present form of class collaboration. The MRP likewise. But in order that the CP may obtain a majority of yes votes, it will not anchor its policy in the constitutional arena but will attempt to lean on the sentiment of the masses who want the coalition broken, and to make them believe that it is struggling for a two-party government and the exclusion of the MRP. It will not pursue this policy too far, however, being in mortal fear of what this sentiment of the masses fundamentally expresses, which it will utilize solely to secure a tremendous vote in the referendum.

4. The policy that I recommend in the referendum means to place ourselves in the current of the masses in order to utilize what is progressive, fundamentally revolutionary, in order to oppose it to the treacherous policy of the CP. Several discussions have already been announced in the PB

on the manner of struggling against Stalinism. To the editorial board of *la Verité*, a factual criticism of Stalinist policy was considered *sectarian*.

I believe that in the referendum we have the possibility, by starting off from an analysis that takes into consideration that the bourgeoisie wishes to improve its positions with the view to a future offensive against the working class, of clearly showing how the CP betrays the interests of the working class because it is up to its neck in class collaboration, including the question of the referendum.

5. Three weeks ago, when the CC met, the masses would have been disinterested in parliamentary wisdom concerning the constitution. Only *la Verité* could publish the history of the Senate. We were correct then, starting off from there, in explaining that the masses could not find their interests represented anywhere in all this history. We were correct in expressing this sentiment by the boycott.

The fact that our voices mingled with those of the PRL would have only little importance if a large current in the masses had understood our policy.

6. *Today the masses are no longer disinterested in the referendum.* They look upon the yes vote from the angle of a struggle against the bourgeoisie. For the revolutionary party it is a question of starting off from that, to express the electoral aspect in its significance on the class plane.

When the revolutionary party is weak, when it is not yet recognized as such by large masses, it does not choose an ideal arena of struggle. It elaborates its policy by starting off from the arena created by the collusion of the workers' parties with the bourgeoisie. The problem is to participate in the struggle, raising the class consciousness of the workers, starting off from their real level.

7. Comrade Privas justifies his position by declaring that the electoral defeat of the CP would communicate itself to the masses by an increase of confusion, but that this would only be conjunctural because "we are in a revolutionary upsurge." For my part I believe that we are, in effect, in such a period, which implies the certainty that the masses can spontaneously enter upon their struggle, independent of the existence of the Party. All the objective conditions push them into combat. But while spontaneity of the masses is a fact independent of the party, for it to pass beyond the treacherous leaderships on a large scale, a certain number must attain awareness. It is nowhere written that the masses, even when taking up combat and passing beyond the CP, are aware of the treachery of the latter. Today, a "defeat" on the electoral plane, for the fact that the CP has not the majority, that it is losing votes, is a defeat, in the measure that its votes do not come to us (if not, how are we to explain that one of the factors which cause us to estimate a situation as revolutionary is the leftward push in elections); tomorrow, another defeat in a partial strike for wages, the day after tomorrow on another plane, and I believe that the confusion of the masses would deepen. It is very true that the stake in the present stage of the class struggle is not possible of a cold settlement, that all the conditions are present for the working class to start the battle. But if the revolutionary party, the PCI, does not act to exploit the conditions for combat, it is possible that the final defeat will take place after a series of partial defeats. Nothing indicates the contrary.

Our revolutionary optimism, our certainty of the possi-

bility of creating a party, rests on a general analysis which causes us to believe that all the conditions are present for class struggle, that these struggles will break out independent of our existence, but that a series of mistakes and errors on our part, an incapacity to link ourselves to the struggles of the working class, will mean that the spontaneous movement, instead of widening, will be limited to a series of partial isolated battles.

Tomorrow an electoral victory of the CP will not, perhaps, immediately bring about a generalized movement, but the passage of three months can lead to a higher degree of understanding of the treachery of the CP.

"Well, the road has been cleared for you, the coalition of the bourgeois parties is defeated, and yet you continue tripartism and class collaboration?"

Who cannot understand the weight that our propaganda would then have for breaking the coalition, for a government of the workers' parties applying a program for the people? On the other hand, an electoral defeat based on mass abstentionism by the working class and petty-bourgeois elements would accentuate the confusion, *would furnish a more solid base to justify the PC's collaboration in the government.* Does this mean to say that all perspectives of struggle would be finished? Not at all. Conditions push the masses to struggle. But the duty of the PCI is to raise the level of consciousness of the workers. By isolating ourselves, *for the boycott would isolate us,* the Party cuts itself off from the possibility of exploiting the treachery of the CP by utilizing the real preoccupations of the masses as its point of departure.

What it is necessary to understand is that a series of conjunctural defeats can culminate in final annihilation. And while opportunism is a grave danger to building the party, sectarianism, based on isolation, a wish to replace the real conditions of the masses' struggle with an ideal arena of struggle, constitutes another and not negligible danger. The Party has suffered from these two deviations.

Recalling the Past

There are historic periods when revolutionists can only exist as a counter-current, when they prepare the theoretical and practical positions for the proletarian revolution, certain as they are from the play of objective conditions that the masses will be pushed into action. Thus Trotsky recalls that it wasn't "good taste" to proclaim oneself a Bolshevik in the factories in 1914. So, too, at the end of 1940, when the masses were in a complete state of prostration, the efforts of the PCI to integrate itself at any cost into the current swept it towards an opportunist policy.

But in the Resistance movement, after the German-Russian War, at the moment when large "sections" began to rally, we adopted a false tactic. If we have risen again, after this, we have, however, been unable to give life to our rising. In the Resistance movement there was the healthy sentiment of anti-fascism. The role of the PCI was to enter into the FTP and the patriotic militias, to intervene in the real actions of the masses, in order to develop our policy of class struggle, and denounce the treachery and fakery of the class collaboration of the workers' parties. The opportunism of the minority did not lie in the desire to integrate itself in the mass movement but in the policy it intended to pursue there; a policy based on the character of

an "oppressed" imperialism, which French imperialism had under the occupation.

Thus, isolated from the masses, we launched the slogans of the worker group or of the group of the workers' front, that is to say, as against the real struggle of the masses we opposed an ideal policy and form of organization, but one which could not achieve any influence. What we had to understand was that on account of our weakness we could not choose our own battle arena. We had to understand that the arena of struggle of the working class was forged independently of us by the conjugate policies of the bourgeoisie and the treacherous workers' parties. The PCI should have accepted the arena as it was, the masses as they were, without empty talk, and should have expressed what was healthy, what was revolutionary in their chauvinist and anti-Hun reactions. How can one fail to understand the lessons of this past?

Opportunism in the Light of la Verité

I want to show very rapidly, in conclusion, how *la Verité* expresses, with radical phrases, a policy which is fundamentally opportunistic.

In the article "The MRP Abandons the Constitution," only the parliamentary aspect is examined. 5,000 printed letters to explain to the working class that the "same evening, the directing Committee of the MRP, on the 15th of April," and all in the same tone. And then advice and lamentations. "It would be absurd. . .", and finally, radicalism: "The only way to weld the socialist-communist bloc is to break the coalition, to mobilize, to. . . etc." Who? How? Why?

In reality we should have explained that it is in the arena of class action that the workers can defeat the pro-

gram of the bourgeoisie, a program strengthened by tri-partyism and class collaboration.

We must formulate our policy in this way:

The MRP, on the parliamentary plane, *breaks the coalition, and begins an offensive against the workers' parties*. How is this possible and conceivable seven months after the electoral victory of October? On Oct. 21, the workers' parties had a parliamentary majority in the country, and they agreed to collaborate in the government with the agents of the trusts in the MRP. They capitulated in all domains: on wages, on nationalization, on the constitution which constitutes the charter of capitulation. But the bourgeoisie wants to go still further, it wishes to make a test of strength in the elections and on the basis of victory to create the conditions for a more solid and firm regroupment in view of a future offensive. The problem is no longer that of the Constitution elaborated by tri-partyism, but one of a test of strength between it and the workers' parties.

We of the Internationalist Communist Party denounce the Constitution presented in the referendum;

We denounce the CP policy of "production";

We denounce the very character of the referendum, but in this struggle we are at the side of the working class, ready to meet the offensive of the bourgeoisie.

YES, for the breaking of the coalition.

YES, for throwing out the MRP.

But this yes is a yes against the boss class!

It is a yes for the struggle for wages, for food, against the wage-freeze and piece-work wages.

It is a yes for the sliding scale!

This means our struggle in the factory, in the fields, against the boss class, with the appropriate forms (strikes, workers' control, etc.).

YES for voting for the Trotskyist candidates on June 2.

Why It Is Necessary to Answer "Yes"

By S. ROCHAL

The meaning of this answer for our electoral campaign is: a widespread posing of the problem of the united front with the CP and the SP.

A section of the majority, with Comrade Marcoux at its head, has rallied to the "minority" position on the May 5th referendum question. With what reticence! Comrade Marcoux's article in *la Verité* is the model of a shameful position which dares not declare itself openly. Its title, alone, is a poem. "Yes," writes Marcoux, "for a SP-CP Government." This is clear to everybody, is it not? And above all to the worker who asks himself what he should do on May 5th. "It is necessary to answer yes in the May 5th referendum." That should have been the title of the article, that should have been our slogan this week. Agitation is not propaganda. Do we accord any importance whatever to the May 5th vote? Then our *agitation* should have dealt primarily with the answer posed in the referendum. It was necessary to say: "Vote Yes in the referendum," and then to continue: "The bourgeoisie, and the whole reaction, united finally, will vote no." It was necessary to stigmatize this position, recall the attitude of the Vatican, and the French church, the main complaints of the bourgeois press, etc. To say, finally: "We shall vote yes

independently of the text of the constitution, because the bourgeoisie is trying to plebiscite its parties against the workers' parties. In this struggle we are at the sides of the SP and the CP. We call upon them to lead this struggle together and to lead the struggle together for the demands of the workers and for workers' control of production."

The slogan "SP-CP Government" will be a central slogan. After the referendum: this week our *agitation* should have emphasized: first, our "yes" vote; second, our solidarity with the workers' parties in this precise struggle, and the united front propositions it was necessary to make, this time, on precise questions, and not as in that fantastic article wherein our leadership proposed a united front to Stalin against Churchill. Does this position exclude criticism of "socialist" and "Stalinist" policies? Not in the least. It is the only position which permits us to attack "tri-partyism" with substantial weapons and to win "the ear" of the Stalinist and Socialist militants. It is necessary to know how to distinguish between agitation, the immediate struggle to be undertaken, and critical, propagandistic activity, which we must carry on parallel to this, as it is required.

This said, I fear very much that in reality comrades Lambert, Michele, etc., have reacted to this problem with a

brainstorm in the manner of . . . Marcoux. Have they really understood the significance of their position on the referendum question? Will the party once more be placed before a fait accompli without receiving an explanation of the opportunistic political turn of the leadership? I fear it will turn out that way.

Now, the meaning of our answer in the referendum must be clear to us all: our position on the referendum means, above all, two things: first, we have become conscious of the reality of a setback of the working class, of a premeditated bourgeois offensive, of the necessity for a united front; second, we place our struggle *also* in the arena of bourgeois democracy, of parliamentarism.

1. It is useless to insist on this point. Let us simply repeat a thousand times the necessity of developing a united front policy every time that the possibility is offered us on a concrete and precise basis, starting with events that are tied to this problem. In a case like the referendum, the problem of the united front is posed: to offer a united front in referendum battle (explaining elsewhere why we do not like this arena of struggle), gives us the possibility of making united front propositions on other important points (food, wages, control. . .) and of being heard then by the rank and file militants of the CP and SP.

2. The facts show more clearly every day the correctness of the "minority" position in its evaluation of the role of bourgeois democracy at this time, and particularly of parliamentarism. If parliamentarism still plays an important role today, it is, evidently, as a result of the low level of

revolutionary consciousness of the masses, of their confidence in the big workers' parties. We must draw the consequences of this observation: a) it is necessary to criticize the constitution on the plane of democracy in general before criticizing it on the plane of its social character; b) there is a possibility of voting yes in the referendum, because of the necessity for the united front, without betraying the programmatic basis of the Fourth International. It is evident that if we were faced with large masses in revolt, building their councils, abandoning in action their confidence in bourgeois parliamentarism, we would not pose the question of defending a constitution which establishes bourgeois parliamentarism.

The question of the united front can be posed in the question of the referendum because the fact of voting for a bourgeois democratic constitution does not constitute, in the present situation, a betrayal of our program, but offers the possibility of a necessary compromise in order to keep ourselves from being cut off from the great mass of workers. From this we must draw all the conclusions. Our widest and most dynamic possible participation in the electoral campaign is the first and most important one. Our defense of the slogan of the workers' united front throughout the campaign, justified by our position in the referendum, constitutes the second, no less important. As for the third, it concerns the party: the necessity of denouncing a leadership whose political and organizational incapacity now reaches its height, one week before the electoral campaign.

April 30, 1946.

Report on Germany and Austria

This article and the following article are summaries of reports made to the International Secretariat by Comrades X. and T., members of the IS, after trips to various sections.

Germany

The situation in Germany, a quick trip by an IS representative in late April indicated, is still not very encouraging. As stated in recent EEC and IEC documents, the atomization of the proletarian organizations by Nazism, the effects of material destruction and the absence of the most militant age-sector of German manhood in Allied and Stalinist prison-camps — these factors have produced until now a considerable degree of apathy among the German proletariat. Material destruction, it should be remembered, is not merely architectural, but inevitably requires the German worker and urban petty-bourgeois to employ all his free time in the mere mechanics of living (search for food, clothing, lodging, authorizations, papers, etc.). Within the workers' parties and the trade unions, there is widespread rank-and-file sentiment that they are pawns in a struggle between the two world power-blocs and that the ideological struggles of their organizations, as well as their struggles for immediate demands, reflect less the needs of the German workers than the manoeuvres of the Anglo-American imperialists and the Kremlin bureaucracy. Sentiment for the withdrawal of all occupying troops (including, and in some cases especially, the Red Army) is widespread but not violent. The degree of militancy varies widely, and in general terms may be said to be in direct proportion to the

percentage of proletarians in the local population, and to the degree of material destruction with its attendant suffering — the highest point being the Ruhr, where both these factors reach their maximum.

The market is practically non-existent, with such a gulf between controlled prices and free or black market prices that there is essentially no connection between them (as in say France or Italy), so that there are two almost totally separate economic sectors: on the one side the food-dole, in which prices are nominal and the use of money almost a mere ceremony, and, on the other, a very sparse black market at such astronomical prices that a worker cannot even think of it. What small trade there is, is largely by direct barter, a baby-carriage for a camera, a bicycle for a divan, without any money being used. As a result of this special situation, workers' struggles are less for small increases in money wages than for larger rations, better food distribution, etc. Another result is a disinclination to work among those (including workers) who have from any savings-source the relatively small sums of money needed to buy the minimum rations for several months. The occupation authorities counter with a system of work cards without which rations will be unobtainable, and lacking which, anyone who is caught will be sent to forced labor. Despite the Allies' widespread use of Nazis in the government and

police force, open or covert resistance to the occupying imperialisms so far appears to arise generally more from ex-Nazis than from the German workers, though individual and isolated actions of considerable militancy have occurred in industrial and port areas, notably Hamburg.

The food situation, which is quite as bad as reported in the bourgeois press and growing gravely worse with great rapidity, is the foremost thought in the minds of all Germans, particularly workers. When the food situation was serious without being desperate, it was a deterrent to the militancy of the workers; but as this situation gets worse, it provokes acts of desperation, as the recent (and continuing) mass attacks on food trains destined for the occupation forces demonstrate. It may be expected that hunger will now become a very important accelerating factor in radicalizing the masses and will bring about a revolutionary upsurge. If our German comrades are not to collapse from hunger, international solidarity food-packages must be organized immediately.

The slowness of regroupment and reactivation of the German proletariat generally, is reflected in the party's organizational situation. Defections were found among former comrades who were tired out or discouraged; some of them were disgusted with the behavior of the Red Army, others degenerated through their reformist collaboration with the "democratic" occupying powers. But in several centers strong groups were found which had held out despite all the horrors of Nazi repression and imperialist war. Although our leaflets and newspapers have been very well received wherever it was possible to distribute them, and although it may be said that our program is finding a response, it still is not possible, even a year after the collapse of Nazism, to speak of a strong and unified German section in Germany itself. The objective conditions are highly favorable to its rapid construction, but it would be unrealistic not to recognize that the work is still in its first stages. The extreme difficulties of travel within the zones and the practical impossibility of travel between zones, have kept the movement atomized and isolated. One of the most elementary tasks, which has now been started, is to create regular contacts among the groups in the seven or eight principal centers where they are organized on the local scale, and out of this to create, by convention and election, at least a provisional leadership on the spot which can centralize further development.

In all cities visited, the German comrades had, though without consultation among themselves or with the center, decided that the most practical organizational tactic for the present moment was that of an independent and illegal grouping, at least half of whose efforts in daily work should be concentrated upon fraction activity and recruiting within the Stalinist and reformist parties. This tactic, however, is to a considerable degree forced upon them by the illegality, and they are all highly aware of the need of legalizing the party. The practical possibilities of doing this vary from zone to zone, and the attempts to obtain legality entail sufficient risk of repression so that the consensus of the comrades is to continue the present organizational tactic until the membership has grown sufficiently to justify the risk of sending the necessary number of comrades out into

the open. If legality can be wrested from the authorities, however, our comrades are certain that the party would win very rapidly to itself important split-offs from the Stalinist and reformist memberships, disgusted with their parties' political lines. A second and less hurried visit in some six weeks' time, may, it is hoped, make serious progress toward resolving this question of legalization, which is undoubtedly a key one for the next immediate period, and continues to be studied both by the German comrades and at the center.

Tardiness of German exile comrades' return to Germany met very little sympathy among the comrades in the country itself, who heartily approved the pre-Conference decision that they return without further delay. Some even wished to set severely short time-limits.

The monthly newspaper, *Neuer Spartakus*, is being distributed, though with great difficulty because of its having to be printed outside Germany itself. It is hoped that plans made during the recent visit will permit transfer of the printing to within Germany in about four or five months. A modest programme of pamphlet publication is envisaged: some of the classic works of historical Marxism to be published legally within Germany, and, from without, first the Transitional Programme, and then an up-to-date edition of *Leninismus gegen Stalinismus*. Continuation and amplification of this badly needed publishing programme will depend to a considerable extent on the possibility of assembling funds from abroad. All our literature is everywhere extremely well received.

In summary, the next stage in Germany should be principally devoted to: the linking together of the present groups, with a view to a national congress which should discuss the political resolution issued from the Pre-Conference, prepare its own action programme for Germany, and elect a national leadership; increased diffusion of the press and badly needed literature, and the transfer of the editing and printing to inside Germany itself; aiding the immediate return of all emigre comrades; study of the best organizational tactics based on the experience of our German comrades, but with the ultimate goal of a *legal* mass party as soon as possible; the serious and regular organization of gravely needed food relief from foreign sections.

Though we are only at the beginning, there need be no grounds for pessimism: if the foundations are well laid in this next immediate period, the objective situation in Germany is such that very rapid and broad growth is highly probable. But these foundations must be rapidly and solidly laid.

Austria

Both the general and the party situation in Austria are for the moment far more advanced and encouraging than in Germany. Less material destruction and quicker return of prisoners have permitted restoration of relatively more normal functioning than in Germany, while the far more catastrophic food situation pushes the workers to protest or perish, and the Allied pretense of "liberation" rather than "occupation" permits slightly greater liberty of action.

Numerous actions for immediate demands have occurred in the factories, and the reformist and Stalinist parties and the trade-union bureaucracy find it hard to keep the militant

workers in line. In one notable case the supposed trump card of bringing Minister-President Figl to speak to a factory meeting boomeranged, since he was roundly booed.

There exist in Vienna two main groups claiming adherence to the Fourth International: the Karl Liebknecht Bund, formed in 1938 by unification of part of the Kampfbund with the Proletarian Revolutionaries, the Against the Stream Group, and the Proletarian Internationalists; and the other wing of the Kampfbund für Befreiung der Arbeiterklasse. The numerically larger KLB is particularly notable for its class composition: 80% industrial workers, 19% white-collar workers, and 1% petty-bourgeois. Investigation indicated that neither group was able to claim fundamental programmatic differences sufficient to justify separate existence, and that the continued separation results more from old divergences embittered at the time by sharp organizational and personal struggles than from any present principled political divergences. In view of this fact, immediate fusion negotiations were recommended, and it is to be hoped that within a brief time they will be completed, and the fused organization, with a large membership, will be recognized as the official Austrian section.

Organization is very efficient and strict, and suffers only from the lack of full-time professionals. The center has guaranteed the funds necessary, but there must still be solved the problem of the work certificates mentioned in the report on Germany, failing which the full-time comrade risks the danger of being seized and sent to forced labor on

a farm. Like their German comrades, the Austrians are for an independent party which however concentrates at least 30% of its membership and activity on fraction work in the SPO and KPO (Socialist Party and Communist Party); but also are deeply concerned with the problem of legalization, which is complicated not only by the improbability of authorization but also by a particularly grave GPU threat in Vienna yet which offers especially favorable opportunities of attracting mass split-offs from the SPO and the KPO. They envisage the tactic of eventually extruding from the party a legal "front" organization as soon as they have the necessary forces to put into it.

They are well supplied with basic Marxist literature, but badly need documents subsequent to 1938. The most immediate problem in Austria, which is expected on May 25th to begin a food regime of 230 calories daily instead of the present Viennese ration of 1275, is the practical one of saving these cadre elements from starving to death; and emergency measures have already been taken by the center, which must be strongly supported from abroad. For the next period, the most pressing Austrian problems, apart from food, are the successful unification of the two groups, and the drive for legalization, either of the party as such or of a "front" organization representing it. These questions are being studied by both the Austrian comrades themselves and the center, and it is hoped, after another visit in some six weeks' time, to be able to report progress on both.

May 17, 1946.

Report on Belgium, Holland and Scandinavia

Belgium

Since the February 1946 elections, the party has undergone a period of relative stagnation. This has been due in part to the poor showing made — due to the inexperience of its young cadres — in the electoral campaign, as well as to the general apathy of the Belgian working class in the first few months thereafter. As a result, the membership's attention has been turned inward and has resulted in considerable inner friction and tension, particularly in the Charleroi district, where a crisis in the leadership developed. No new elements have been recruited to any appreciable extent and the leading cadres have not been broadened.

In recent weeks, however, the strike wave spreading throughout the country has awakened the workers from their apathy and the party is beginning to feel the healthy impetus of it. Militants in leading capacities in the unions are approaching the party for aid and advice in the unfolding struggles. In the Center region, a well-known Trotskyist leader challenged the main Stalinist functionary for the post of secretary of the miners' union. The reformist Prime Minister, Van Acker, has publicly attacked the Trotskyists, charging them with "fomenting" the current strikes. All these developments clearly mark a break with the past period of apathy among the masses and stagnation for the party. New opportunities face the small and young party.

To fully take advantage of these opportunities, however, the Belgian PCI will have to give greater attention than ever before to the problem of cadres. The leadership

remains too restricted. The direction of the press, of the organizational and trade union activities, is confined to a few individuals. No broad teamwork has as yet been established. No systematic effort is being made to build up and educate a leading staff. Up to the present, the party's work — particularly in its propaganda aspect — has been characterized mainly by very good *individual* performance. What is necessary, if the PCI is to become transformed from a propaganda group into a genuine proletarian party, is the organization of its work as a *collective* effort.

To this end, the International will have to aid the party:

- 1) By organizational help in the form of frequent visits to assist in the work of the central committee;
- 2) By providing a liberal place for promising, young leading comrades in the international cadre school;
- 3) By working out, together with the Belgian leadership, of a plan to broaden the leading staff, to introduce new elements into the direction of the work, to train proletarians for leading positions, to departmentalize the work.

The regular appearance of *Lutte Ouvrière*, the establishment of an open headquarters in Brussels, the beginnings of work among the Flemish population — all these are acquisitions which mark progress and on which further advances can be based. Consolidation of these gains, a tightening up of the party structure, the serious application of the planning principle in the work, can help the party to take advantage of the new opportunities opening up, and to overcome the crisis of stagnation. A long and sustained effort

in this direction will be required. But it must be made if the personal frictions characteristic of small propaganda groups — and which in Charleroi have become critical — are to be overcome and the party brought on the high road of systematic political mass activity.

Holland

The Revolutionary Communist Party of Holland has made very substantial progress since its national congress last Christmas. It has about doubled its membership. It has successfully completed and gone over the top in its 1,000 subscriptions campaign, steadily increasing its circulation, with a press run at present of about 10,000. Local groups have been organized in numerous industrial centers. Party headquarters was moved to Amsterdam after the congress and since then the Amsterdam group has grown considerably from a handful into the most numerous branch of the party. In addition, the party has made a number of important gains in the trade unions, recruiting some outstanding local trade union functionaries. The RCP has also issued several pamphlets and while developing the *Tribune* as the regularly appearing weekly agitation organ, is preparing to issue a theoretical monthly.

In spite of these gains, the party leadership felt that the RCP was not yet prepared to participate in the recent elections. Conditions for participation are much more difficult and more expensive than in most European countries. The leadership, which works very systematically and with notable teamwork, feels that it is necessary to prepare the ground more carefully before the party can enter into electoral activity.

During the recent seamen's strike the RCP has been playing a very active role, issuing leaflets and posters in its own name in support of the strike. When the Schermerhorn government declared its intention of sending troops into the port of Amsterdam to break the strike, the party issued a manifesto calling for the spreading of the strike into a general protest action. The posters bearing the manifesto evoked great favorable response among the workers all over Holland when they appeared on the kiosks of the main cities. All newspapers played it up. The Stalinist *Waarheid* in a front page editorial attacked it as a "provocation". The RCP replied to the attack by pointing out that the Stalinists are preparing to sell out the strike in return for places in the new government resulting from the elections. Meanwhile the strike has spread to the dockworkers, to the metal workers and to individual plants in various industries, with the party maintaining steady activity popularizing its name and program and recruiting among the strikers.

Politically, there has been a tendency to make mistakes that is characteristic of young revolutionary parties entering into mass action. On the one hand may be noted a leftist error in the party's *direct* call for a general strike instead of calling upon the established trade unions to spread the strikes and take general strike action. On the other hand, there has been a tendency inside the party to soft-pedal attacks on the Stalinist trade union leadership, and the Stalinists generally, "in order not to cut ourselves off from the masses." The party leadership is aware of the danger in these tendencies and is combatting them pedagogically, but systematically.

There is an intense internal political life in the RCP

(and particularly a very healthy interest in the political developments inside the International. Many important documents in the international discussion have been translated into Dutch and carried in the Internal Bulletin. The comrades stress the need of publishing the material of the International in German, which they read more fluently than the other major languages, and point out the importance of this for future work not only in the German-speaking countries, but in Scandinavia as well.

To aid in the self-development of the leadership, the party will send several of its best militants to attend the international cadre school. Arrangements have also been made to establish more firmly its contact with the International and to aid the latter in its German work.

Denmark

On this tour, first direct contact was made with the Danish group and with a representative of the Norwegian group.

The Danish group offers another example (and so does the Norwegian) of the amazing vitality of the Fourth International. Before the war there were only a few individual students who in a very general way regarded themselves as Trotskyists. In the course of the war itself a new group, entirely different from the former, was formed, with the aid of leading German Trotskyists, which was active throughout the whole occupation period. Composed of a few comrades, most of them youths, it put out the illegal Trotskyist organ *Klassekamp* and jointly with the Left Socialist youth, a broader organ *Frihed*. It cooperated with the "Clarte" group of intellectuals in general resistance activity and toward the end of the occupation made contact with militant trade unionists and organized together with them the "Arbejderopposition," issuing its illegal newspaper of the same name and taking a leading part in the several general strikes in Copenhagen against the Nazis, which were at the time headlined in the entire press of the world.

Since the "liberation," the group has been slow to come out of its habits of illegal functioning. At the present time it is composed of a tight group of comrades who are fully on the Trotskyist position and consider themselves members of the Fourth International. These comrades are concentrated around the monthly "Arbejderpolitiek" (taking the name of one of the illegal organs issued during the occupation). The monthly does not proclaim itself as a Trotskyist organ, but aims to do so by stages, increasing its Trotskyist content from issue to issue. About 2,500 copies are printed and disposed of.

In addition, this tight group participates in the much broader "Arbejderopposition" in the trade unions, in which it takes a leading part, issuing its journal of the same name in a circulation of 20,000. Among the leaders of the "Arbejderopposition" in the teamsters and truckdrivers union are several worker-comrades belonging to the narrower "Arbejderpolitiek" group. They participated in the leadership of the recent Copenhagen general strike in May and virtually challenged the official trade union administration in authority among the workers. In the course of the strike, a comrade who is a well-known Danish author, led a demonstration before the Riksdag or parliament, was arrest-

ed and placed in an insane asylum under trumped-up charges and later released. This comrade was won over to the group soon after the "liberation" in the course of a mass action. He had previously been active in the Stalinist illegal organization and now works as publicist for the "Arbejderopposition."

The group and its monthly are beginning to attract attention on a wide scale, with sympathy from the ranks of the CP as well as the Social Democracy. Recently, a split-off from the latter, a group of 50 to 60 people, sent a representative to "Arbejderpolitik" proposing joint work. The group is preparing to organize itself into an official section of the Fourth International while publicly continuing its work of clarification as an independent organization.

Towards the end of the occupation, the group was hit by arrests and two comrades, among them a leading German Trotskyist, were sent to the Neuengame concentration camp. They were to be shot but escaped amidst the confusion resulting from the collapse of the Nazi regime.

Internal political life in the group is very intense. There is an avid interest for documents and publications of the International, of which they have had none since 1940. They describe their political position at present as the position of 1940, "the one occupied by Trotsky in the polemic against Shachtman." But they are, of course, anxious to exchange views with the other sections and bring their position up to date.

Norway

The group in Norway is a continuation of the pre-war "Oktober" group. They have several old-timers, more experienced comrades in their organization, which is somewhat bigger than the Danish group.

During the occupation, they held a key position in the underground movement because of the political as well as technical qualifications of a number of leading comrades. By this means they gained great influence even over cadre elements of the CP, whose leadership was discredited by its continuous zig-zags before and after the outbreak of the war with the USSR. They also attracted wide attention and considerable adherence in student circles and led the student strikes during the occupation. Valuable trade union contacts were also made, which are at present being developed, particularly in the building trades in Oslo.

In organizational tactics, the group works similarly to

that in Denmark. It has organized fractions in both the CP and the reformist Labor Party. Openly, it conducts its work in the form of an educational organization, the "Marxistisk Klub," which includes some 15 youth leaders and several prominent authors, famous for exposing the collaborationist bourgeoisie in the underground. Recently it has begun to publish a newspaper *Optakt* (Upsurge).

The Norwegian group also is preparing to affiliate formally and to establish an open, independent section.*

Other Information

The Danish and Norwegian groups maintain regular contact with each other and with German comrades in Sweden, where no group exists as yet. The two groups will cooperate with the aid of the International in establishing a Swedish nucleus, which up to the present has been very difficult. Both groups want firmer international contact, and want to send representatives to the international cadre school. They are in need of basic literature covering the period of the war and, in developing their work, will also need material aid. On the other hand, they are prepared to help the Austrian and German groups with food shipments, since there are no restrictions in Denmark.

German Work

Aside from the contact with the local groups, the tour also provided for very important contacts in Germany, as well as with German comrades abroad. These should aid considerably in developing the work of reconstituting the German section, which is the most pressing task of the moment. Limited as the tour was, the results achieved show the great value of such direct organizational contact, and its indispensability in the whole coming period of tightening up and consolidating the international organization. Personal contact, more than anything else, can achieve this in the minimum time required. Organizational tours must be organized more frequently and more extensively in the period ahead. The groups must be aided in getting rid of their feeling of isolation and helped to become part of the International in every sense of the word. There is no doubt that they want to be.

June 1, 1946.

* The Norwegian comrades have prepared a more extensive report of their own, which will be issued soon.

Letter on German Work

To the IEC, from the Delegates of the Dutch Section

We do not intend to give here a detailed analysis of the German situation. We hope that soon there will be other comrades, especially German comrades, who will draw the attention of the International to this question.

However, we are convinced that the formation of a Trotskyist organization in Germany is a problem of the greatest importance. It would be an error that we would soon regret, if we did not give fullest support to our German comrades in accomplishing this task. We must learn

to see ahead and to act correspondingly; we have already let slip too many favorable opportunities in Europe. We did not know how to react to events quickly enough — and this was no less true in Holland than elsewhere.

It has often been repeated: "Germany is the heart of European capitalism, the German proletariat is an essential and indispensable part of the European working class." The terrible defeat of 1933 with its consequences for the world working class is proof of this, though unfortunately in a

negative way. At present we must also recognize that the absence of revolution in Germany a year after the collapse of German imperialism, has considerably slowed down the tempo of revolutionary development. But the revolution will come, despite everything, and in Germany too; and the German workers will make their voice heard even before this happens. We must not be missing there. We do not intend here to criticize the activity of the International, but it is necessary to point out the danger in the shameless slandering of the German proletariat by the Allied imperialist brigands and their wretched accomplices in the ranks of the working class, which can cause even us to underestimate the role of the German proletariat. "Germany will never again play any role," say the bandits. There is only one answer to this: "You think you make history. The German proletariat will show you the contrary. You will have to deal with it, and you will crack your head on it."

In our opinion it is necessary to consider the following facts:

a) The occupation of Germany will come to an end only with the revolution. The contradictions between the imperialist powers are increasing, not diminishing. There is no trust among them. The problem of withdrawal of the occupation troops will always fail of solution because of mutual distrust; but above all it is the contradictions between the countries, on the one hand, that wish to redivide the world, and the Soviet Union on the other hand, which are becoming sharper. Already the imperialists consider the boundary between the Russian zone and the Allied zones as the next front line. Like the question of defense of the Soviet Union, the problem of the German revolution is closely linked up with the struggle against the third world war.

b) Though still remaining passive, the German proletariat has no reformist illusions. It wants communism, but not "Russian communism." With our stainless banner, we have great opportunities.

c) The workers' parties which have been permitted by the occupation authorities, are not yet stable. Our future work will be considerably facilitated to the extent that we make a resolute appearance today.

d) The German comrades have a *right* to our complete support. We have the *duty* to come to their aid in every way. They are still too weak — far too weak. The enormous advantage of feeling themselves supported by a real revolutionary International will help them to surmount many difficulties.

e) The growth of the Trotskyist movement in Germany also offers great perspectives for its development in Russia. The successes of the Fourth International in the "Allied" zones will find a response in the Russian zone and will also become known to the Russian workers. No doubt this will make it possible for the discontent against the Stalinist bureaucracy to rapidly take political forms, leading to the formation of a Trotskyist party in Russia. Optimism? The moment has come for the Fourth International in Russia. The total encirclement of the Soviet

Union by the imperialist powers has proved the complete bankruptcy of the theory of "socialism in one country." The Russian workers do not believe that the brigands will settle accounts among themselves until they have settled accounts with the Soviet Union; they *must* orient themselves now toward the world proletariat, toward the world revolution. Furthermore, the contradictions within the bureaucracy are increasing. If its function as mediator between world imperialism and a backward workers' state was correct, then this "mediation" must degenerate more and more into blackmail and pressure by American imperialism against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Because of this, the leaders are more and more constrained to adopt policies contrary to the real interests of the masses. Their fear of the revolution will compel them to yield to American pressure; on the other hand, the lower functionaries who have closer ties to the masses will find themselves in opposition to the top apparatus, and these differences in the state apparatus are favorable for illegal work.

But let us return to the task in Germany. Comrades who are familiar with the situation of our movement in Germany and who are in general well acquainted with the German question, will of course have more to say on this subject. Our purpose is to draw the attention of the International to this problem. The sections should be able immediately to begin organizing practical aid.

The following things should be possible:

1. To organize German committees in the bordering countries, consisting of German comrades and those in these countries who are in charge of German work.

2. Each section to be responsible for a certain area in Germany. France, for example, for the Rhine, Belgium for the Ruhr, Holland for the coastal areas (Bremen, Emden, etc.), Denmark for Schleswig-Holstein, etc. . . .

3. The committees, together with the sections, to draw up address lists. This should be possible since many comrades were deported and forced to work in Germany during the war and have contacts there, etc. . . .

4. To sell *Neuer Spartakus* at a high price to comrades and sympathizers in order to aid the formation of the German section.

5. To organize distribution of material among the German prisoners of war, in close collaboration with representatives of the German section.

6. Translation into German of all the publications of the Fourth International.

The reformist and Stalinist leaders have betrayed the German proletariat a thousand times. Our International, the only revolutionary international, has a task of honor to fulfill. Fraternalization with the German working class must not remain an empty word! Let us help the German comrades, who have an extremely difficult task to accomplish, by making this task easier for them. The fruits of this work will be a rich reward for our efforts.

Extract from a Report by the Canadian Comrades

The Canadian section is at present just raising its head after a long period of decline and stagnation. Early in 1937 the Canadian section, then known as the Workers Party, entered the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (a petty-bourgeois Social Democratic party with some trade union support but deriving its main strength from the agrarian regions and from middle class elements in urban centers). The entry was carried out after a long and sharp internal conflict over the correctness of the application of this tactic at that time. The decision carried only by a small majority. The entry was carried out when the organization was weak and isolated and defeatism was growing in its ranks. The entire top leadership who had proposed the entry dropped out of the movement and the entry was conducted by less experienced comrades. The CCF was already in the grips of a strong and unopposed bureaucracy and our comrades were compelled to operate on a completely illegal basis. A section of the opponents of the tactic failed to cooperate in the entry and it was not until 1938 with the aid of the International that the groups were reconciled.

Upon the advice of the International, preparations were made to wage a principled fight against the CCF leadership and gather together our forces for the reorganization of an independent Canadian section. Early in 1939, after the expulsion of the remaining comrades from the CCF, the Canadian section was reconstituted as the Socialist Workers League. Up until the outbreak of the war, which Canada entered in September 1939, we published a monthly organ called, *Socialist Action*. Before we were able to gather together the scattered threads of an organization which had only a few branches scattered across this vast country, the war broke out.

The bourgeoisie immediately enforced repressive anti-labor legislation called "Defense of Canada Regulations" (these laws are now inoperative). One of our comrades was the first to be imprisoned under these laws for his principled opposition to the war. The Stalinist movement was declared illegal and its leadership interned. No printer would handle our publications. The war hysteria had serious repercussions on our movement. The entire leadership, which was politically immature, evaporated before the storm. During the war a handful of comrades managed to maintain connections and published 3 or 4 issues of a mimeographed paper. An organizational trip was made across Canada and connections were renewed with a few scattered contacts and the old centers of Montreal and Vancouver. Due to our weakness of forces and our illegality we turned once more toward the CCF which provided a shelter from political repressions and limited contact with leftward moving workers.

In November 1944 a National Conference was held in Montreal with representatives from all the old major political centers of the movement. There it was unanimously decided to prepare immediately for the organization of an independent Canadian Section of the Fourth International. A National Committee was set up and funds raised for the publication of a monthly paper. This paper, *Labor Chal-*

lenge, was first published in June 1945 as a monthly; it is now published as a twice-monthly. *Labor Challenge* appears as a Trotskyist paper but *does not openly represent* a formally constituted Trotskyist organization. In Eastern Canada where opportunities for effective work in the CCF are extremely limited we have erected a front organization called "Friends of *Labor Challenge*" which has no ostensible membership but permits us to carry on open activities such as meetings, forums, socials, etc.

In the West, where limited opportunities still appear to exist for work in the CCF, the group functions entirely as a fraction in the CCF. At present a discussion is taking place throughout the organization on the basis of a Political Committee document which calls for the immediate creation of an independent section of the Fourth International. Although no formal vote has yet been taken, the overwhelming majority of the movement has indicated its acceptance of this perspective. The only factor restraining us from immediately forming the open section of the Fourth International is the situation in British Columbia where the entire group is involved in the CCF and is now waging a sharp fight with the CCF leadership. The group here too, after a lengthy discussion, is now united behind the PC perspective. The next report to the IS will no doubt herald the formation of the Canadian Section of the Fourth International.

Our numerical strength at present stands approximately at . . . and is concentrated in 4 cities. The overwhelming majority of the membership are proletarians. More than 50 per cent have been recruited to the movement since the outbreak of the war. In the past five months approximately 25 persons have been recruited, mostly workers with a number of student and professional elements. The entry into the CCF and the war took a great toll on the organization and accounts for the defection of the great majority of the pre-war membership.

Our press is a twice-monthly with approximately 1000 paid subscribers and a press run of 3,500. Last fall \$1,000 was raised to put the twice-monthly on its feet. In the mid-April 1945 issue we have announced a campaign for 1,000 new subscribers and everything indicates a complete success.

The character of the membership is quite diversified. On the West Coast, which accounts for almost half the membership, we have a good foothold in the trade unions and have developed some able and responsible trade union leaders. About half of the Toronto membership are factory workers and trade unionists, but unfortunately they are scattered in many different unions and our work in this field is as yet comparatively ineffective. The other main group in Montreal with only one or two exceptions is composed of technicians. We have carried on some outstanding work in the rapidly expanding Quebec labor movement, but due to the lack of French-speaking workers we have been unable as yet to take full advantage of the excellent opportunities afforded us in this area. We hope to be able to overcome these difficulties in the next period.

We are at present conducting a period of discussion on organizational perspectives referred to above. The only

opposition to the Political Committee document comes from a small but vocal centrist opposition which has been hopelessly discredited and wields almost no influence in the organization. The European Secretariat's "The New Imperialist 'Peace' and the Building of the Parties of the Fourth International" was unanimously adopted by the National Committee.

The 1944 Montreal Conference set up no dues structure but financed the press and the organization by a system of

branch pledges. Money thus accumulated enabled us to publish the monthly and the \$1000 raised later on permitted us to publish the twice-monthly. A recent appeal for funds coupled with certain economy measures enables us to operate now at a reasonably small monthly deficit. One group has imposed dues on its own members but this question will be dealt with at a national convention which we hope to be able to hold some time this coming summer or fall. . . .

May 11, 1946.

Letter of the Spanish Group in Mexico

Addressed to the IS

Comrades:

We have received several communications regarding the International Pre-Conference just held in Belgium. First of all we are compelled to raise the sharpest protest against the way in which this Pre-Conference was held. We note in passing that it became, in the very first line of the news release dated April 1946, a "Conference" of the Fourth International. Why? Who authorized that it be transformed into a Conference?

The methods employed by the new IS which issued from the Pre-Conference are the military methods of a big General Staff preparing operations and giving orders which must be carried out to the letter, and have nothing to do with the democratic centralism proclaimed by the Fourth International nor with the needs of our international movement after seven years of isolation. A barracks discipline is demanded of the sections at a time when these sections have not been invited to explain the reasons for this discipline. This is the best way to drive them to rebellion. This concept of a secret General Staff reveals itself again in the ridiculous way in which the propaganda about the Pre-Conference is approached. All the sections will publish on D-Day (why not at H-Hour?) an identical news release which says nothing of interest on the Pre-Conference itself. Would it not have been better, instead of this standardized press release, to immediately furnish each section with a report on the work of the Pre-Conference and the full text of the Manifesto which was adopted, and on the basis of this to ask them to give the widest possible publicity to the discussions and resolutions of the session? Instead of this, the platitudinous news release robs the section of all interest in spreading propaganda on the Pre-Conference.

Furthermore, no preliminary discussion took place, for the only document (dated December 1945) which seemed to have to do with the preparation of this Pre-Conference reached us at the very moment when the sessions were being held, if they were held in March as your communication of March 20 indicates ("A Pre-Conference of the Fourth International took place"), and so timed that it was impossible to reply to it (A Conference of the Fourth International took place early in April). What was the agenda of this Pre-Conference, who determined it? No one knows except for the group of conspirators who participated in it. And do you wish all the sections to accept the conclusions of the Con-

ference with closed eyes? In that case we will not be among them, and we reserve our opinion on this Pre-Conference until we are acquainted with a report of the discussions and with the Manifesto which was adopted. No one knew where or when this Pre-Conference was held (except for the police!), not even functioning members of the EC; no one knew which sections were represented there, and why these sections rather than others. To be sure, we note that the news release speaks of the presence of delegates from "several other countries of the Western Hemisphere," among which Mexico, for example, does not figure. Why? What sections are referred to?

All the foregoing reveals a total lack of real preparation for the Pre-Conference, and dangerous bureaucratic methods which we oppose with all our force.

We believe also that the Pre-Conference has not been a step ahead for the Fourth International, as a result, on the one hand and most importantly, of its lack of preparation, and also because, to judge by the document of the ES, none of the problems of the present moment were really discussed there. Thus the news release which we must give wide publicity to, says: "In this Manifesto the Conference draws the balance sheet of the second imperialist World War and demonstrates that the capitalist world, which has resolved none of its fundamental contradictions through the war, is again moving—through a period of great economic and political difficulties, dominated by the fundamental antagonism of the USSR and Anglo-American imperialism. . . ." etc. The nature of this antagonism is not specified. Is it a question, as we believe, of an antagonism like that between two bands of gangsters who come to blows when the hour arrives for dividing up the loot? In that case, the use of an equivocal terminology does not make it possible to understand what the editors of the news release mean. But we believe rather that they hold to the outworn formula of an antagonism between the property system of the capitalist world and that of the "degenerated workers' state" of the USSR, when everything shows that the USSR is nothing more than a hollow shell, empty of all the revolutionary content of October.

The news release says also: "The Manifesto of the Conference ends by calling on the exploited masses of Europe and the world to fight under the banner of the Fourth International." In the present state of affairs this constitutes,

in the best case, an empty phrase, and in the worst, a demonstration of an absolutely unworkable ultimatum. It would have been more honest and saner to call on the masses to create with us a genuine revolutionary leadership, for let us remember with L. T. that "the crisis of mankind is the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." Now if we already were this leadership, the crisis would be resolved—which is obviously inaccurate. This revolutionary leadership, for every Marxist who refuses to be satisfied with words, remains to be created. Can one actually assert that the Fourth International constitutes a revolutionary leadership, except potentially,—when its lack of material means did not allow it to raise its voice during the entire war, when it was not even able, owing to the lack of necessary contacts, to insure the routine functioning of the IS, when the new IS itself speaks to us out of the depths of the earth where it is hidden? No, this revolutionary leadership does not yet exist. All that exists is the will to create it. But this desire must remain powerless as long as one continues to be satisfied with words and to live comfortably on positions taken ten years and more ago.

We believe that the first duty of the Pre-Conference was to open a broad discussion on all the problems of the socialist revolution in our epoch in order to make genuine preparation for the coming World Congress. Now it would certainly seem, if one is to judge by the two sentences of the news release quoted above, that the Pre-Conference is still wearing its pre-war glasses and is saying that the Fourth International was not mistaken on anything and has nothing to add to or subtract from its program, thus imitating the regular practice of Stalinism. Has the experience of these last years been analyzed without prejudice? It does not seem so from the news release; and yet if this experience had been studied without prejudice, it must have led the International to revise our estimate of the nature of the Russian state and consequently our tactic toward it and toward Stalinism. Instead of that, the position which the Pre-Conference—according to its news release—seems to have taken, transforms the Fourth International into a left wing of Stalinism at the very moment when the workers of numerous countries can no longer have anything but hatred and contempt for Stalinism. Such a position, if not revised within a short period, can rob the Fourth In-

ternational of all effectiveness and gravely threaten its very existence.

We therefore ask that a World Congress of the Fourth International be prepared immediately, which will have the full powers that the Pre-Conference did not have, and to be held within the maximum period of one year. Toward this end we will send you within a very short time a document on what we understand by the preparation of this Congress. But we state here and now that the Congress will have no meaning unless all questions are discussed there, the questions of the Russian state, Stalinism, Socialist-Stalinist government, nationalizations, organization, the policies followed by the different sections during the war, etc. The very broadest preliminary discussion is necessary in order that all points of our program may be submitted to a pitiless and clear-sighted criticism which will eliminate from it everything outdated that still exists in it. Under these conditions the Congress will mark a decisive step forward in the life of the International, and the International will become a genuine revolutionary leadership of the masses, capable of leading them to the assault on the capitalist regime and the taking of power.

To sum up:

1. We protest against the anti-democratic way, completely unjustified by the circumstances, in which the Pre-Conference was held.
2. To give a news release to the press, we will wait until we have information on the discussions and the resolutions of the Pre-Conference.
3. We point out that the task of the Secretariat is not that of an ultra-secret leadership but that of coordinating and animating by its suggestions a broad world discussion.
4. It is only to the extent that the IS will understand how to animate the discussion and to obtain the participation of all the sections, even those which are not official sections, that the next World Congress will be a positive step toward the building of the Fourth International.

Mexico, D. F.
April 17, 1946

*For the Spanish Group of the
Fourth International in Mexico. — B. P.*

Reply of the IS to the Spanish Group in Mexico

Comrades:

We have received your letter of April 17, 1946. You use a tone which is difficult to characterize, in order to bring up questions which give evidence neither of seriousness on your part nor of good faith.

You rise up against what you call "the military methods of a big General Staff, etc." because we compelled you, as it were, to publish "on D-Day" a "platitudinous news release." The circular which was sent you specified that this news release was intended to make the propaganda on the Pre-Conference uniform for the outside press, and that it was to serve only *as a basis* for your own propaganda.

As for the "transformation of the Pre-Conference into

a Conference," the same circular stated precisely that the term "Pre-Conference" is for internal use in the International, but in the outside press we will use the term "Conference." All these measures were considered necessary, not only by the IS but by the entire body of delegates of the twelve sections of the International who were present at the Pre-Conference.

We call your attention to the fact that the leading bodies of the International, which are far from constituting an "ultra-sectarian leadership," are nevertheless compelled, since they have become the object of constant attacks by capitalist and Stalinist reaction in Europe, to take certain measures of elementary security. As for the preparation of

this Pre-Conference, we inform you that it was called and prepared for by common agreement between the ES and the IS, more specifically Comrade Logan who was then International Secretary. The first proposal of the IS was to hold an International Conference as quickly as possible with the sole purpose of electing a new International Executive Committee and a new IS and drawing up a Manifesto.

The ES insisted that there be a preliminary political discussion, on the basis of a document which it agreed to draw up itself.

The IS agreed to this. Soon afterwards Comrade Logan, seeing the state of complete disorganization of the IS, addressed a letter to the EEC and the ES asking them not even to wait for the Pre-Conference but to transform themselves immediately into the IEC and the IS.

The ES refused to accept this latter proposal and advised Comrade Logan to continue to assume the functions of the International Secretariat.

The date, place, agenda and preliminary documents of the Pre-Conference were known by the IS, which had the duty of issuing the conference call to all the non-European sections with which it was in touch (the ES being charged with calling the European sections).

The date, place, agenda and preliminary documents of the Pre-Conference were also known by the SWP, by its minority, as well as by the leadership of the IKD, all of whom were asked to communicate with all sections with which they were in touch.

Comrade Munis was a member of the IEC, and, as we know, was in contact with at least Comrades Logan and Morrow. How does it happen that he did not know of the Pre-Conference. In any case, if the Spanish Group in Mexico did not receive the call for the conference, the fault lies in the first place on the IS, which together with the ES was charged with preparing the Pre-Conference, and on no one else.

As for your opinion that the Pre-Conference was not a step ahead for the Fourth International because it did not revise our position on the USSR in the direction you wish, that is an opinion you share with only an extremely small minority in the International.

Such was not the opinion of the overwhelming majority of the most important sections of the International, for whom the reexamining of a question does not necessarily mean revising the position formerly taken on this question, but can also mean reaffirming its correctness under new conditions.

Actually your complaints against the Pre-Conference

are of a political nature, since throughout your letter you reveal a series of political differences with the line of the Fourth International on the USSR, the building of the International, its functioning, etc.

While maintaining the discipline of the International, you will have full right to express your point of view through the discussion which is already being carried on internationally on the basis of the documents and the resolutions adopted by the Pre-Conference.

But the sections which participated in the Pre-Conference were unanimous in their opinion that whereas the International carries on democratic discussions, it nevertheless exists at the same time as an organized World Party with a leadership and a discipline.

The leadership elected by the Pre-Conference by the common agreement of all sections present must function with full powers until the next World Congress.

It cannot allow the continuation of an undisciplined individualistic petty-bourgeois spirit which proclaims its rights but accepts no discipline.

With the end of the war and the steeling of the sections in the struggle, the International has leaped ahead from the stage of small groups each one carrying out its own policy and accepting the discipline of the International only where its policy (the policy, that is to say, of the majority) coincides with theirs.

Faithful to the unanimous mandate given to us by the Pre-Conference, we are determined to continue on the road laid down by the Pre-Conference.

We once more extend to you a fraternal invitation to comply with the instructions of the IS, to proceed without delay with the propaganda on the Pre-Conference (you are the only one of all the sections of the International which has not acted in conformity with the instructions of the IS), and to give us as quickly as possible a report on the activities of your group, its numerical forces, etc. Under the discipline of the International you have all the rights and opportunities consistent with the regime of democratic centralism, to participate in the international discussion and to make your point of view known on all questions already raised or which you yourself wish to raise.

In case you persist in ignoring the discipline of the International we will appeal to the IEC and ask it to make a ruling upon your attitude.

With our communist greetings,

For the IS
PILAR

May 25, 1946