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RESOLUTION ON "McCARTHYISM"

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RESOLUTION ON "McCARTHYISM"

1. The political current presently headed by Senator Joe McCarthy is a potentially fascist tendency. Its fascist potentiality derives from its support of the capitalist order: in certain circumstances capitalism can be temporarily maintained only through the intercession of fascism. In this sense a wide range of American politicians, from Senator Humphrey and Douglas on one hand, to McCarran and Dirksen, on the other, are all potential fascists, supporters and beneficiaries of the capitalist system bent upon maintaining it: on the day when these gentlemen are convinced that the capitalist system can be maintained only by the destruction of every vestige of proletarian organization and democracy, on that day will some of them realize their fascist potentiality, become actual fascists, and set about the creation of a movement that can raze the unions to the ground and exterminate, with an iron heel, the democracy for the working class upon which the unions are based.

Any supporter of the capitalist system is, by virtue of that support, a potential fascist who may or may not realize his fascist potentiality and become an actual fascist. Between the potentiality and its realization there is, however, a considerable political development which cannot be avoided and which Marxists, consequently should not ignore. If we say that McCarthy is a potential fascist leader, that is, that he may become the leader and organizer of American fascism, we do not, in this description, separate him in any way from all the other supporters of capitalism who may some day -- some of whom will certainly some day -- face up to the realities of capitalist crisis and accept the fascist movement as their only way out.

Senator McCarthy unquestionably has many characteristics which would be useful to an American fascist leader: he is cynical, brutal, dishonest, vain and very ambitious. At the same time he obviously includes liabilities as well: he is a Catholic, he is dishonest in financial matters, openly linked with Texas and midwestern oil and manufacturing millionaires, a Senator and professional politician with a voting record; McCarthy is a Republican and, up to now, he stands for nothing in the public mind other than fanatical "anti-communism."

McCarthy has openly been -- (possibly as part of a conscious plan to present himself some day as an American fascist leader) -- not even as "anti-labor" as some of the other bourgeois democrats. His support to the plan for drafting the striking coal miners is not more indicative of fascism than was Roosevelt's proposal to Congress for a labor draft, and the support which this proposal received there from "liberals" such as Hollifield, Helen Gahagan Douglas, Humphrey, Senator Douglas and others who are obviously not fascists -- yet. McCarthy stands for nothing except fanatical anti-communism and McCarthy.

If Senator McCarthy is not the ideal fascist leader with an unsullied past, youthful idealism, and a stainless banner, then he nevertheless does have personal qualities that equip him for fascism's tasks. History, moreover, knows how to make use of substitutes. History does not, however, materialize into the actual political world every potentiality inherent in a political figure: the question of what Senator McCarthy may or may not become in the

foreseeable future is dependent upon what he is now, upon what the political and social environment demands, and upon what Senator McCarthy himself deduces from that environment. To say that he is a potential fascist is, in reality, to say almost nothing at all.

2. Fascism is bourgeois reaction. However every type of bourgeois reaction is not necessarily fascism. Fascism is a special kind of bourgeois reaction, employing certain forces in its work, and achieving certain specific objectives. From the point of view of its class character there is no difference between the fascist and the democratic regimes. Both are bourgeois. But the class character of the regime by no means exhausts the question: in addition to the class character of the regime there is also the question of the relation of the proletariat to the regime, and the position of the proletariat within society. From this point of view there is a decisive difference between the democratic and the fascist regimes.

Bourgeois society can be considered as a pyramid; at the base of this pyramid is the working class: the only entirely productive class and the source of surplus value; above the workers but smaller in size and importance is the middle class: amorphous, economically and politically atomized, and combining producers and exploiters; at the very narrow top is the capitalist class: small in number, the exploiters.

Fascism does not change this situation which can be changed only by social revolution. Fascism is based upon a change in the relationship between the classes. In the democratic regime the capitalist class rules through the intermediary of the middle class which pulls the working class along behind it in support of the capitalist system. The middle class leads the working class with the ideological ties to capitalism that are represented by the petty bourgeois concepts of "democracy," "justice," "truth," religion, patriotism, etc. Those essentially empty formulas, however, would be inadequate in themselves to insure petty bourgeois leadership of the proletariat were they not bulwarked by material concessions and alleviations in the form of wages and hours laws, free public school education, the right to organize and bargain collectively, etc. Utilizing all these things, the working class has created within bourgeois society a considerable area of proletarian democracy concretely manifested by labor unions, cooperatives, and political parties. Within these organizations, inspired directly and indirectly by the bourgeoisie, a bureaucracy has arisen which is middle class in its ideology and social role. Together with the economic middle class the Labor Bureaucracy has transformed the proletarian organizations into further supports of the capitalist system.

Under the democratic capitalist regime the capitalist class rules through the middle class leadership of the working class, making this middle class leadership of the proletariat possible, and relatively stable, by means of concessions and reforms.

This democratic capitalist regime is the most satisfactory regime for the big bourgeoisie so long as it can afford the necessary reforms and concessions which it is necessary to give not only to the middle class but to the proletariat. Capitalism in our time, however, is a system in decay. The capitalist class in country after country reaches the point where it can no longer give additional

reforms and must take steps to recapture what it conceded in the past. This necessarily requires a different relationship between the classes: unable to "win" further concessions from the big bourgeoisie, the Labor Bureaucracy and its middle class allies are unable to hold the proletariat to support of capitalism.

It is at this point that the historic role of fascism begins. The capitalist class must take back the reforms and the concessions that it gave in the past. But the trade unions and the working class political parties, to an extent, stand guard against this cut in the living standards of the masses. In opposing the capitalist reaction they utilize, with some success, the democratic provisions of free speech, free press, assembly, etc. They utilize, with temporary success, the agencies of the democratic state which, to an ever narrowing extent, does maintain the democratic provisions. The capitalist need to cut the living standard of the masses is resisted by the proletarian organizations and, to a lesser extent, by the democratic state. Fascism thus comes into the world, in its ideal form, as a governmental system under which there are no unions, no proletarian organizations of any kind, no laws limiting the exploitation of labor, and no democratic provisions of any kind which would enable labor unions to be created or labor legislation enacted.

Between the ideal form of fascism existing in the minds of the big capitalists, and its material creation in the real world, between the potential and the actual that is, there is an intricate and important development.

The fascist party is an instrument designed by big business to bring a fascist regime into actual existence. The instrument is not, of course, the regime; the tool is not the product. But the instrument is designed to produce the regime: the fascist party from its inception is a tool designed by big business to destroy the labor unions and political parties, to raze to the ground every and all vestiges of democracy, to atomize and shatter the proletariat as an organized force so that every worker all by himself faces the full weight of bourgeois society, and to replace the democratic state with the totalitarian apparatus. Such is the object and end of the fascist movement: the end, as is well known, determines and shapes the means.

The fascist party intends the destruction of the labor unions and the democratic state. But the big bourgeoisie constitutes the apex of a narrow pyramid, it includes only a tiny percentage of society; it is incapable with its own force alone of destroying organizations embracing millions of workers. The big bourgeoisie cannot with its own forces achieve the fascist overturn. It must have an ally. Beside the working class and the capitalist class there is only the middle class. The fascist movement is accordingly directed, in the first instance, at organizing the middle class against the proletariat. This presents definite problems giving the fascist party definite characteristics as it attempts to solve these problems. The working class and many strata of the middle class are natural allies, linked by common and similar problems and by the needs of the struggle against the common enemy. The vast majority of the middle class, in most circumstances, has neither need nor desire to organize for the destruction of the labor unions and proletarian organizations.

The mass development of a fascist movement, accordingly, is possible only at certain times and in certain circumstances. The middle class can be organized for the political destruction of the proletariat only when social crisis has forced the middle class out of its accustomed rut and impelled it, in ruination and despair, to project the orientation of a radical change in society; and the middle class can be organized in this way against the proletariat only if it is convinced that the proletariat is opposed to, and incapable of achieving, a radical change in society. It is for this particular development, on the basis of social crisis, that the fascist leadership and cadre prepares. In times prior to the social crisis the fascist cadre is organized; it is organized, however, not on the basis of the middle class movement as it is then but upon the basis of the "radical" program that the middle class can be organized for when the crisis strikes. Hitler spent a decade promulgating the radical sounding nonsense of "National Socialism." Mussolini had a radical background as "socialist" editor and included in his original cadre a large group of Italian socialists disgusted with the aimlessness of Italian socialism; Mussolini was much more radical sounding in defense of "social cooperation" and "Italy the great proletarian" than was Matteotti and the Italian Socialist leaders.

The fascist party is a "radical" "anti-capitalist" party. This radicalism is, of course, false and the anti-capitalism empty: for a long time now capitalism has been best defended by those who pretended to be against it. For it is not the empty "anti-capitalism" of such movements that determines their social role; it is the absence of, and the positive opposition to, any doctrinal or scientific understanding of how to end capitalism which makes "anti-capitalism" the best defender of the bourgeois order. The Social Democracy was the best example of this, defending capitalism by pretending to work evolutionarily against it, and thus holding the proletariat back from consistent revolutionary theory and practice. Fascism, in a sense, copies the Social Democracy in this respect; but with this difference: fascism pretends to a revolutionary anti-capitalism instead of the Social Democracy's "gradualness" and organizes the middle class instead of the proletariat.

Fascism organizes the middle class not only for the destruction of the proletarian organizations but also for the destruction of the democratic state. The democratic state is, of course, bourgeois. So also is the fascist. But the democratic state has been the instrument of the capitalist class over a lengthy and frequently stormy period. It is staffed by politicians who have one eye on the ballot box accessible to workers. The democratic state has been "reformed" and then "reformed" again, and it has been "exposed" on frequent occasions. Like a club in the hands of a policeman, the democratic state is a weapon in the hands of the capitalist class; also like the policeman's club repeated use, frequent reform, and new tasks produce the day when the democratic state is an inadequate instrument in the hands of the capitalist class. The fascist movement projects the concept of destroying the democratic state and replacing it with the totalitarian apparatus.

This end likewise shapes the fascist party as its means. The state in its irreducible minimum is "nothing more nor less than detachments of armed men in defense of property" (Trotsky). In order

to bring a new bourgeois state into existence the fascist movement must create and develop its own detachments of armed men as the nucleus of the new state. Hitler had his Storm Troops and Elite Guards, Mussolini the Black Shirts. These special bodies of armed men are trained, in Trotsky's phrase, "to fight the workers just as certain breeds of dogs are trained to hunt game." Their extra-legal activity, their terroristic campaign against the working class, coupled with the fascist party's social demagogy, brings the fascist movement to power; in the creation of the "new" fascist state these special armed bodies are the cornerstone.

Fascism is thus not only a radical party of the middle class; it is a radical party of the middle class which embodies extra legal force in the form of special bodies of armed men in the course of its rise and development.

This description includes the common denominator -- the lowest common denominator -- of the fascist movements regardless of their specific circumstances and their particular individual characteristics supplied by variations of tradition, personality, political climate or opportunity. The fascist movement, in any specific development, will unquestionably be more than simply a terroristic movement of the middle class organized around an "anti-capitalist" program. Any specific fascist movement will be more than this, but in order to be a fascist movement at all it must first of all be this; any of its other characteristics lack decisive significance. Until the movement outlines a "radical" program and organizes special bodies of armed men around it, it may be a reactionary and a dangerous movement, but it is not fascist, and will very likely degenerate into the well stocked limbo of previous middle class movements.

The fascist party must organize the middle class and, along with it, the top and the slum strata of the proletariat. It must organize this force: there is no other force capable of destroying the powerful trade unions. But fascism cannot organize these forces openly for the perpetuation of capitalism: in the developing social crisis, the only period when fascist overturn is possible, its organized forces would turn away from capitalist defense. The big business representatives must organize the middle class on a "radical," "anti-capitalist" basis.

(In this is revealed the extent to which the Social Democracy or social democratic leadership of the proletariat is an indispensable ingredient of fascist victory; if the social democratic gentlemen do not hold labor back from proposing decisive social change, then it is labor and not big business which can organize the middle class on this basis. At the same time, if the proletariat is not stymied in this respect, then the fascist leaders cannot lay the blame for the continuation of the capitalist crisis upon the shoulders of the working class and thus inspire its armed gangs against it.)

The radically organized forces of the middle class are assigned certain specific tasks by their fascist leadership: they are to destroy the trade unions and the democratic state. This can in no case be achieved without the use of force. Force means bodies of armed men. Because of the nature of its tasks the fascist movement cannot avoid, nor has it ever sought to avoid, the creation of these special armed bodies.

To recapitulate: fascism is organized by big business as a means of smashing the trade unions and liquidating the democratic state. For this it requires special bodies of armed men. These can be recruited in sufficient numbers only from the middle class and the slum proletariat. These latter, however, cannot be openly organized in defense of big business but must be recruited upon the promise of drastic change in society. These two features -- a radical program of "anti-capitalism" and special armed gangs -- furnish the two inescapable and basically essential features of a fascist movement.

To many Jews fascism has meant simply anti-Semitism. Among these latter Senator McCarthy is frequently referred to as fascist because, it is alleged, he is also an anti-Semite; however, there are other Jews who deny that McCarthy is a fascist because, it is alleged -- he is not an anti-Semite. In each case anti-Semitism is considered to equal fascism. Apparently forgotten is the example of Italian fascism which was organized and seized power without promulgating anti-Semitism at all; Italian fascism embraced anti-Semitism in a half-hearted fashion only two decades later under the urgings of Hitler.

It is difficult, as Trotsky once wrote, to find examples of reaction in the modern world which are not tinted at least with anti-Semitism. This "socialism of fools" played an important role in the propaganda utterances of German fascism. It will certainly be present among the followers of American fascism. However, it may not be a cardinal feature of American fascism or one of its official propositions; anti-Semitism is not an indispensable ingredient of a fascist party; and only future development can indicate, through the personality of the American fascist leader, and through the social circumstances of the moment, whether anti-Semitism will or will not accompany American fascism.

In the long run American fascism will prepare for war against the USSR and her satellites, and it will prepare concentration camps and gas chambers for the sympathizers of the USSR in this country. In the long run it must inevitably do these things in accord with American imperialism's basic needs. But in the short run, organizing a movement and leading it to power, there is no political law which requires that American fascism be anti-USSR or anti-Stalinist. American fascism, organizing to obtain power, could very well adopt a live-and-let-live attitude toward the USSR, could concur temporarily in the Stalinist offers of "coexistence," could incorporate friendship and tolerance for the USSR into its radical demagoguery; and it could undoubtedly include in its basic cadre many of the formless radicals trained in the school of Stalinism. Illustrative of such "friendliness" toward an anti-Marxist workers state is Father Coughlin's call for trade with Red China, just as his support to the demand for a guaranteed annual wage is illustrative of one of the radical, essentially anti-capitalist demands upon which American fascism will build its party.

Nor does American fascism have a pre-determined attitude toward the Negro people or toward the foreign born. American fascism may emerge as an aggressively "lily white" and "100% American" movement, openly threatening fifteen million Negroes and innumerable foreign

born Americans with ghettos, concentration camps and deportation. It may follow this pattern, and the American labor movement can count itself fortunate if American fascism does follow such a line. There is good reason to believe, though, that American fascism will be considerably less stupid and more "scientific." In a pseudo-scientific and radical development of fascist ideology the Negro people may again receive an empty promise of social and political equality. In the absence of a scientific exposition of fascism, many Negroes with no anti-labor sentiments whatsoever, may very well be caught up in a fascist movement, as they were once introduced as unwitting strike breakers in auto and steel plants, and used against their own best interests. When the "Popular Front" in Spain refused national self-determination to Spanish Morocco, General Franco was able to employ Moroccan soldiers as the main bulk of his original rebelling forces. American fascism may follow this model and not the model of the Ku Klux Klan.

American fascism may adopt the time honored panacea of the middle class and promise "money reform"; on the other hand it may very well insist upon "hard money." American fascism may be a super-patriotic movement in the old jingoistic tradition of Hearst and his disciples; it may also, considering the fragile position of American imperialism in a shrinking world, propound the "one world" ideology. It may be a militantly religious movement interpreting Biblical texts in terms of social demagoguery; but it might also be as cool to organized religion as was the atheist Mussolini.

The fascist program means nothing whatever apart from its efficacy in organizing the middle class against the proletariat. American fascism will unquestionably embrace some of the formulations described above. But each of the above mentioned "ideas" has been propounded, in its time, by organizations obviously not fascist. The American fascist movement will indicate its fascist character, not by any specific programmatic declaration, but by the general character of its program as a "radical" "anti-capitalist" conglomeration, and by the nature of the movement itself around special armed bodies.

3. Senator McCarthy has been branded a fascist over a number of years now by a great many bourgeois politicians such as Tidings, Flanders, Benton, Eisenhower's brother, Mrs. Roosevelt, and Adlai Stevenson. Unfortunately, but inevitably, these hardly scientific judgments have had their reflection in the trade unions and the radical movement. The Stalinists, of course, are foremost in throwing the epithet "fascist" many times in the direction of the man to whom they once gave support. Trade union leaders, not Stalinist, have half-heartedly supported this judgment. Even Walter Reuther appears to agree that McCarthy is a fascist.

These critics have either suffered from McCarthy's frame-ups, or they have seen him abuse his senatorial immunity, and twist his Congressional Committee into a personal publicity device; they have seen him repeatedly violate the most elementary precepts of "democracy," "justice," "fair play," etc. Such a man is obviously no democrat; he must be -- why he must be a fascist! Underlying this judgment is the proposition (presented by Earl Browder at one time to a congressional committee) that the present American state is not

bourgeois but simply "democratic." Each of these critics allows himself every now and then an "innocent," "unimportant," violation of democracy; however, any violation on such a scale as McCarthy employs, and so unashamedly committed, is not possible to a democrat: McCarthy is a fascist.

Marxism disagrees. Of the indispensable attributes of an American fascist movement, the political tendency presently headed by Senator McCarthy fulfills not one requirement. Grouped behind McCarthy is that lunatic right wing fringe which over two decades has supported Hamilton Fish, Martin Dies, General MacArthur, Senator Taft and others of that ilk. In the political climate of the cold war and witch hunt this tendency has become less isolated, considerably more noisy, and has succeeded in obtaining a wider hearing and acceptance for many of its basic prejudices. This lunatic fringe has increased in scope and confidence, not because it is a fascist movement in process of formation, but because it thoroughly supports, and has assisted somewhat in the performance of, an important bourgeois-democratic task. When the task is entirely solved -- or when an entirely new method of solving it is adopted -- the McCarthy "movement," as it now exists, will either sink back into its old impotence or else evolve an entirely different character for itself. This is to say that it may become a fascist movement; at the present time it is the lunatic right fringe of bourgeois democracy.

The Marxist task is not, of course, the defense of McCarthy, but the defense of the radical movement against illusions about McCarthy, about fascism, and above all about bourgeois democracy. The American state, it must be firmly understood, is not simply "democratic": the American state is nothing more nor less than "detachments of armed men" in defense of (bourgeois) property; by virtue of the wealth of the American capitalist class this "special body of armed men" has been able to disguise itself with the trappings of "classless" democracy. But this democracy is a sham democracy; its sacred principles of "justice," "decency," "fair play," etc., constitute only so many fig leaves attempting to conceal the bourgeois nature of this state.

People unaware of the class nature of the American state can naturally see McCarthy's activity only as some unusual "fascist" manifestation; in actuality McCarthy is the living expression of the hypocritical bourgeois democracy; he is assisting, in his own way and with one eye on the main chance, in the performance of a necessary bourgeois democratic task facing this particular bourgeois state in these particular circumstances.

Roosevelt and the New Dealers reacted to the main and elemental rebellion of the American people in the years 1933-38 with the time-tested device of "reform" and "concession." The bourgeois state, as it had existed under Coolidge and Hoover, was a very poorly disguised instrument of big business. The depression forced the American people, led by the working class, into an essentially anti-capitalist struggle. This struggle, even if inadequately led, became directed more and more against the bourgeois state as the heart of the capitalist system. Roosevelt and his New Dealers took the line of derailing this struggle, of dissipating the rebellion, in the illusions of governmental reform, and of state enforced reform and concession in the economic sphere.

This "reform" of the governmental apparatus, this work of disguising the agency of the "60 families" as a friend of labor, necessarily required that a considerable number of radical politicians, "socialists," "communists" and unclassified "radicals" be introduced into the state apparatus. These radicals were there, not only to carry out a number of by no means useless reforms and to organize a number of genuine concessions, they were also there to hide from the aroused people the authentic character of the state and thus prevent the realization that only the replacement of this state by the proletariat could supply permanent solution of the economic and social crisis. Without understanding the class nature of the state, or their role as a disguise for it, a large number of radical politicians were consciously introduced into the state apparatus by Roosevelt and his associates. Bourgeois "radicals" such as Ickes, Wallace, Perkins, Hopkins, Harriman, etc., were dragged from obscurity. The "friend of labor" ideology was assiduously propagated. In this way the rebellion of the American people was "grounded" by the bourgeois state in the same way that the "conductivity" of a lightning rod grounds a bolt of lightning.

With the rising threat of German and Japanese imperialism the American state had to prepare another "war for democracy" in behalf of American imperialism. The totalitarian and fascist features of the German and Japanese regimes, thoroughly hated by the American masses, made it possible for Wall Street to picture its war as a "democratic" one; the supposedly democratic war made further use of the radical politicians. These latter remained in the state apparatus, whole-heartedly endorsing Wall Street's war and serving, with their presence, to convince the masses of the necessity of the war and its democratic character. In the war time alliance with the USSR the American bourgeois state was able to use effectively the assistance of the radical politicians in its dealings with the USSR and with the resistance movements that developed under German occupation; and both Roosevelt and Truman knowingly introduced a great many radicals, including Stalinists, into the state apparatus. Roosevelt was himself quite cynical about this: he had Earl Browder put into prison during the Stalin-Hitler Pact, and he promptly pardoned him when the pact was ended.

By 1948, at least, two entirely different problems faced the American bourgeois state: the domestic rebellion of the American people had primarily evaporated in the illusions of the war and post-war booms; on the international scene the expansion of the USSR had made it the main rival of the United States and the greatest obstacle to the expansion of capitalism. The bourgeois state attempted to adjust itself to the new problems: through the Taft-Hartley Act American capitalism began its counter-offensive against the American people; through the Cold War it began its direct struggle against the USSR for world domination. These different tasks required different people and a different governmental ideology; the "radicals" had to go. The "socialists" "communists" and anonymous radicals, once necessary for the maintenance of the bourgeois state, in changed circumstances found themselves inadequate for the new tasks and unwanted by the authentic capitalist representatives. The men who had arranged the reforms and concessions of the New Deal were inadequate to push the drive to lower living standards and curb the labor unions. The men who had arranged the details of the war-time alliance

with the USSR were not competent to arrange the Cold War against the USSR and the preparations for the coming hot war.

On this basis the most authoritative representatives of the bourgeois order, working behind the scenes at first and then more and more openly, began to purge the state of the radicals and create a governmental ideology in which no trace of the New Deal's radicalism would remain, and in which no governmental figure would consider himself a "friend" of labor or a "friend" of the USSR.

From the point of view of a pure and classless democracy, with the conception of the American state as simply "democratic," this work is certainly a very undemocratic and reprehensible procedure. But from the point of view of class interests, with the conception of the American state as an instrument of the capitalist class, the witch hunt like the Cold War is an entirely understandable development with readily apparent reasons and definable limits. The bourgeois democrats, one of whom is Senator McCarthy, have set out to make the bourgeois state a more adequate instrument for dealing with the current problems of the American capitalist class. If many of them, in the process, have been shorn to an extent of their "democratic" pretenses, this is not an evidence of their "fascism," but a demonstration of the bourgeois limitations of their "democracy."

Fascism in America will not arrive as an integral part of the present witch hunt; it is ironic but true that it is not the success but the failure of the witch hunt that will force American capitalism to take the fascist path. If the democratic state can be "unreformed" into an effective capitalist instrument, then the bourgeoisie can avoid for a time the more dangerous expedient of fascism. In this sense Senator McCarthy and his associates are doing what can be described as "pre-fascist" work: they are making the bourgeois state a temporarily more effective instrument, but at the same time they are forced to destroy the democratic illusions about this state that exist in the minds of the masses.

The Liberal and Stalinist campaign against McCarthy as the leader of some kind of "special" American fascism (a campaign that should, in strict logic have been advanced against Truman, Eisenhower, Dulles, Clark, Brownell, McCarran and Velde) has the net effect of excusing the bourgeois state for responsibility for its undemocratic "excesses" by assigning these to the realm of "fascism," and of concealing from the American people the bourgeois character of both the state and its "democracy." There were people in the early days of the New Deal, alarmists-on-the-right, who regarded the New Deal's reforms as nothing more nor less than "social revolution." These people have their concomitants today in the alarmists-on-the-left who regard the task of "unreforming" this same state as nothing less than "fascist" counter-revolution. The liberal, anti-Marxist essence of this judgment is supplied most clearly by the liberals themselves: they firmly believed, in the days of the New Deal, that they were assisting in a gradual, peaceful and legal "social revolution"; today they are as firmly convinced that a legal, peaceful and gradual "fascism" is being directed against them. In this they are at least consistent: the liberal error of "classlessness" underlies both judgments.

4. Every indication in the present political life of the United States is to the effect that the American capitalist class, through

its most influential leaders, has decided, not upon the creation of an authentic fascist regime but upon the cheaper and safer totalitarianization of the American state through the development of a military Bonapartism. No fascist party indicates any prospects of mass development and a drive for power: the Technocratic organization, more elaborate than any of its rivals, continues in calm circumstances to outline its "theory" and build its cadre; Father Coughlin fulminates in readiness and hope of a more pressing need for his services; and General Charles Lindberg, the best suited of all of them for fascist leadership, contents himself with the publication of his book and a restrained political pronouncement from time to time.

Meanwhile American political life develops, not on the German or Italian models, but in substantial duplication of the French experience in the period from 1936-39: the bourgeois state is emancipating itself from any "democratic" control; the executive branch of the government, including the military is freeing itself from important control by the legislative branch; and government becomes more and more a "decree" and a "fait accompli" proposition. There have been elements of Bonapartism in the American state since Roosevelt's first government: the present line of American capitalism appears to be the intensification and development of this Bonapartism with the eventual but not imminent culmination of this line in a military dictatorship.

They face considerable difficulty on this, or any other, road. When sharp social crisis disrupts the American society, it will impel the working class into economic and political struggle of such scope that "decree" rule by the executive will become impossible, forcing the bourgeoisie to take the road of authentic fascist settlement and the workers the road of proletarian revolution. In these circumstances the Technocrats, or Lindberg -- or possibly McCarthy -- will produce on the American scene the authentic lineaments of American fascism: they will outline their "program" of social change and create special bodies of armed men to deal with the aroused workers. This development is fully possible in the foreseeable future. It is possible but it is not yet actual. At the present time the bourgeoisie is adequately represented by the "unreformed" democratic state and is moving, not toward a fascist state, but toward a form of "cheap totalitarianism."

5. What it is possible for Marxists to know authoritatively about the development of fascism, American or otherwise, is derived from the analysis of Leon Trotsky. Fascism, as a specific form of bourgeois reaction, appeared on the political scene only with the rise of Pilsudski in Poland and Mussolini in Italy. Naturally Marx and Engels were unable to deal with these movements except in the sense that Marx and Engels continued in political life in the living figures of Lenin and Trotsky. The first Comintern pronouncements on the nature of fascism contained considerable confusion, much of which was never corrected by the Comintern and received rectification only in the analysis of fascism that Leon Trotsky made in response to its German rise in the form of Hitlerism. What Marxism has to teach the American workers about the nature of fascism is found in the analysis that Trotsky made of the German events of 1930-33 and his writings about France subsequent to the General Strike of

1936. This analysis has received historical confirmation in two important senses: on the positive side in the movements of Hitler, Mussolini and the semi-fascist Franco; from the negative side in the failure of French and English fascism to develop into power seeking movements.

Anxious to whitewash the democratic state by assigning its bourgeois and undemocratic practices to the realm of "fascism," petty-bourgeois democracy and unscientific socialism will, of course, entirely ignore the basic analysis of fascism as made by Trotsky. That may not prevent them, however, from eagerly seizing upon one of Trotsky's rare and by no means considerable errors in order to show that the last of the great Marxists would also have considered — that McCarthy is a fascist.

The only judgment by Trotsky that can be so misused is contained in the transcript of a discussion which Trotsky held on the Transitional Program with a group of comrades in June, 1938. (Printed in the Feb. 1946 issue of the monthly magazine.) In the course of this discussion Trotsky said: "I read about the tactics of Hague. It is a rehearsal of a fascist overthrow. He represents small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened. He has his gang which is absolutely unconstitutional." Further: "In Newark the Mayor begins to imitate Hague and they are all inspired by Hague and the big bosses. It is absolutely certain that Roosevelt will observe that now in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means. Roosevelt is not a fascist as the Stalinists claimed in 1932. But his initiative will be paralyzed. What can he do? The workers are dissatisfied. The big bosses are dissatisfied. Roosevelt can only maneuver until the end of his term and then say goodby. A third term for Roosevelt is absolutely excluded. The imitation (of Hague) of the Newark mayor has tremendous importance. In two or three years you can have a powerful fascist movement of American character. What is Hague? He has nothing to do with Hitler or Mussolini, but he is an American fascist. Why is he aroused? Because the society can no longer be run by democratic means."

It would be futile, and the evidence of a conception of Trotsky as some kind of infallible "Pope," were one to deny that this analysis is primarily incorrect. A third, and a fourth, term for Roosevelt was clearly not "absolutely excluded"; Roosevelt did not "observe that in the crisis he can do nothing with democratic means"; nor was his initiative "paralyzed"; he did not maneuver until the end of his term "and then say goodby" (except in Sinclair Lewis' book). With his accustomed bourgeois democratic methods Roosevelt maintained the democratic state as an adequate instrument of the American capitalist class, was elected to not only a third term but to a fourth term as well.

Trotsky's analysis was incorrect as any Monday morning quarterback can plainly see. Trotsky's error is two-fold. In the first place, like most of the great Marxists when they were wrong, there is the error in tempo. Trotsky's basic analysis forecast the inability of the American bourgeoisie to rule indefinitely with democratic means; it foresaw the time when the bourgeois democrats would be paralyzed as adequate representatives of the capitalist class, and when further electoral victories would be impossible for the left bourgeois democrats. Trotsky was correct in all these points:

American history is clearly developing in that direction. Trotsky was correct in his basic analysis; he was incorrect, however, in the tempo with which he considered that these factors would become decisively operable on the American scene.

Trotsky's error in the tempo of events may very well have derived from his other error which consists in a misconception as to what Hague was and represented in New Jersey. Hague did not represent "small bosses who became infuriated because the crisis deepened"; Hague was not "aroused because the society can no longer be run by democratic means." Hague was the legally elected Mayor of Jersey City and a National Committeeman of the Democratic Party. He never formulated the demands of the "small bosses" in the "recession" of 1938. Nor did Hague, in actuality, seek the destruction of the labor unions: with the support of AFL unions he attempted to keep the CIO out of Jersey City just as other Mayors had tried, in turn, to keep it out of San Francisco, Detroit, Los Angeles, Memphis, etc. In this endeavor Hague did not employ "his own gang which is absolutely unconstitutional" but the Jersey City Police and Democratic Party hangers-on, sworn in as special police and deputies. This use of the police was as unconstitutional as is their usual use in labor disputes; but there is a qualitative difference between using a legal armed body in an unconstitutional fashion and forming an unconstitutional armed body as the nucleus of a "new" state.

Trotsky's error in tempo derived from misinformation as to the nature of Hague's political activity and the forces upon which it was based. There isn't, however, a hint in this passage that Trotsky had abandoned his principled approach to fascism in favor of some version of American "exceptionalism." IF Hague had represented "small bosses infuriated because the crisis deepened" (and this would inevitably have been expressed in the formulation of some sort of "radical" or "anti-capitalist" program) and IF Hague had formed his own "absolutely unconstitutional gang," THEN Hague would indeed have been an American fascist, and THEN the tempo of American development would have been accelerated. Trotsky's mistake is in no sense empirical or unprincipled; his errors derived from misinformation and, in making them, Trotsky reasserts his principled analysis of fascism and thus makes the error historically unimportant and relatively easy of correction.

Effective proletarian political activity is not possible without a principled, fundamentally grounded approach to the classes, the state, and the forms of the class struggle. In regard to fascism there is no "Marxism" with any scientific content apart from the analysis of Leon Trotsky. Many revolutionary socialists show a commendable desire not to "miss the boat" in fighting American fascism the moment it appears as an actual threat. But this requires a scientific method. In a fit of impatience to be about the settlement of tasks not yet posed by history, well intentioned comrades run the risk of ignoring or misapplying the science of Marxism. In picking up the error that Trotsky committed in regard to Hague, they unconsciously turn a great revolutionist into a prop for the bourgeois order: if Hague was a fascist, then McCarthy is also; the class struggle is developed, then, not so much against the bourgeois state as against this "fascism" of one of its parliamentary bodies. The net effect of this campaign is not to hurt McCarthy, or the bourgeois

state, but to excuse the bourgeois state for the indisputable evidences of its bourgeois character, and thus hinder the proletariat in its understanding that the bourgeois-democratic state is an "executive committee" of the capitalist class, and that only a workers state can offer an appropriate objective for the class struggle.

Dennis Vern
Sam Ryan

Los Angeles, California
Sept. 12, 1954

Note: We have not dealt in the above resolution with specific corrections in the line of the paper or party agitation, although such is necessary in the event that the basic line of this resolution is adopted by the SWP convention. Such a correction would be introduced; at the present time it is primarily necessary to decide the nature of McCarthy and his "movement" before concretizing a definite campaign against him.

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