

Summer 1944

File

ON THE SUPREME COURT DECISION ON THE TEXAS PRIMARIES

The decision of the United States Supreme Court denying the Democratic Party of Texas the right to exclude Negroes, merely on the ground that they are Negroes, from voting in the primaries, establishes the legal right of the Negroes to vote in Southern elections. As a consequence, the desire and the movement of the Negroes in the South to exercise the right of franchise has been given a great impulsion. On the other side, the Southern white bourgeoisie, organized predominantly in the Democratic Party, have avowed their determination to maintain the exclusion of the Negro from the primaries, and to resist the enforcement of the Supreme Court decision.

This conflict between the white ruling class and an oppressed people, which contains all the elements of a violent collision, revolves around a fundamental democratic right. The fight of the ruling class to deny this right, as well as of the oppressed Negro people to exercise it, is rooted deeply in the economic relations between the two and is reflected throughout the social relations prevailing primarily in the South. The entering wedge at the present stage of the struggle to break down these reactionary social relations is the fight to extend the democratic right of suffrage to the Southern Negroes.

This fight is, therefore, progressive and objectively revolutionary. It strikes at one of the principal foundation stones of capitalist rule in the South, and consequently, in the United States as a whole. The Workers Party, therefore, gives wholehearted support, with all the means at its disposal, to this fight. It stands unqualifiedly for the right of the Negroes to vote both in the primaries and in the regular elections.

The principal contribution the Workers Party can make at the present time to the success of this fight is in the field of propaganda and agitation. In the exceptionally complicated situation prevailing in the South, the position of the Workers Party must be set forth with the greatest clarity and simplicity, and at the same time in closest conformity with its fundamental socialist principles.

The Party and its press must utilize the situation to point out:

The basic economic and social reasons for the bourgeois fight to maintain "white supremacy" in the South, and its reactionary character from the standpoint not only of the Negroes in the South but also of the North, not only the Negroes as a whole but also of the white working class in general and the labor movement in particular.

The reactionary character of both bourgeois parties, the Democratic and the Republican, particularly insofar as the "Negro question" is concerned, their joint conspiracy to prevent the Negroes in the South from acquiring or exercising the most elementary democratic rights, including the right to vote.

The need of the Negro people in the South, composed overwhelmingly of workers, poor farmers, sharecroppers and agricultural workers, to join with their white brothers in breaking with the two parties of oppression and exploitation and establishing an independent Labor Party of their own, one of the most outstanding of whose demands, especially in the South, will be complete equality for the Negro people, one of the most outstanding of whose struggles will be the fight to assure the entire Negro people of the South their democratic rights, including the right to vote in any primaries of their choice as well as in the regular elections.

The need of the white workers and the lower strata of the white rural population coming to the defense of the Negro people whenever and wherever it seeks to exercise the right to vote, and this right is either challenged or denied; and the need of the entire labor movement, especially of the North, acting likewise.

The fact that the first, elemental reaction of the Southern Negroes, or of sections of that population, to the Supreme Court decision, is to exercise their democratic right by voting in the primaries of a reactionary, bourgeois, anti-Negro and anti-labor party, the Democratic Party, necessitates the greatest care and understanding in the presentation of the standpoint of the Workers Party.

In its agitation and propaganda on this aspect of the problem, which is now the outstanding aspect, the Workers Party makes it clear that it is entirely on the side of the Negroes who want to vote in the Democratic Party as against the white bourgeoisie which seeks to prevent it from participating in its primaries. This means that the Workers Party will defend, and urge everyone else to defend, the right of the Negroes to vote in the Democratic Party primaries if they so desire, regardless of the views the Workers Party has about the character of the Democratic Party. We will defend this right as elementary political democracy.

The Workers Party will also make clear that it understands the situation, created by the white bourgeoisie in the South, which prompts Negroes to exercise their democratic right through a reactionary Jim-Crow bourgeois party.

It will further explain, and lay the greatest emphasis upon it, that even to exercise their rights in this manner requires, for the Negroes in the South, the maximum of independent organization and measures of self-defense against the Jim-Crow bourgeoisie and its political organizations, inasmuch as the Negroes cannot and dare not rely for the protection of their rights upon the purely legal guarantee of their democratic right by the Supreme Court or upon any of the political institutions of the Southern bourgeoisie which are organized from top to bottom to keep the Negroes disfranchised and oppressed.

At the same time, the Workers Party cannot, either orally or in its writings, call upon the Negroes to vote in or for a reactionary bourgeois party, that is, to carry on bourgeois politics. While it defends to the limit the right of the Negroes to vote in or for a bourgeois party if that is their free decision, it cannot urge the Negroes to exercise their democratic right in that manner, inasmuch as it is not in consonance with socialist principles or with the best interests of the Negro people and of their union with the exploited white workers. The fight for democratic rights, the defense of the exercise of these rights, is not identical with any and every form or manner in which these rights are exercised. On the contrary, the manner in which these rights are exercised must be considered from the standpoint of (i.e., must be subordinated to) the basic interests of the struggle for freedom of the working class, both black and white.

However, in view of the special situation that exists in the South, primarily in view of the fact that the fight of the more militant elements among the Negroes for the right to vote takes, or tends to take the form of

insisting on the right to vote in the Democratic primaries; in view of the fact that this fight awakens the Negro masses to political consciousness, political activity and sets them in conflict with the white ruling class, it is necessary to adapt the tone and the emphasis of the Party's agitation and propaganda to the situation in such a manner as to subordinate its refusal to urge the Negroes to vote in a capitalist party to the most vigorous support of the right of the Negro to vote as and where he pleases, that is, his right to exercise the suffrage in whatever way he finds most expedient, and to the most vigorous agitation among all workers for similar support on their party.

Max Shachtman

RECOMMENDATIONS RE SUPREME COURT DECISION ON TEXAS PRIMARIES

1. Our basic policy is to advise the Negroes to help in the formation of an independent Labor Party.
2. Specifically, to call upon the CIO, AFL, agricultural organizations, etc., to take the initiative to organize a provisional body for the formation of a Labor Party, making special efforts to enroll the Negro workers and sharecroppers.
3. To recognize, however, that the actual exercise of the suffrage, especially in the face of the opposition of the Southern ruling class, is an act of revolutionary significance and is progressive, whatever forms it takes in the present conjuncture of Southern parliamentarism.
4. The exercise of the franchise by the Negroes in the South today cannot be regarded merely or only as a parliamentary measure or action. In the circumstances it sets simultaneously into motion also mass struggle between the Negro masses and the white ruling class, and next the class struggle between the Negro-white masses and the capitalist class.
5. The exercise of the franchise by the Negroes, either through mixed primaries or through independent Negro primaries, even if on a capitalist ticket (e.g. Democratic) must be regarded as essentially progressive today in its immediate and historic context. An action of the latter instance, for example, actually carried, can pose the Negro problem on a national scale when Negro delegates to the Democratic convention claim their seats as representatives of their district.
6. Hence, the intention to vote and the proposed Negro primaries (e.g. South Carolina) cannot be regarded in the specific circumstances merely in a parliamentary or opportunist sense. From both a mass Negro standpoint and a class viewpoint, explosive politics are latent in such a step as Negro primaries.
7. Such an action (independent Negro primaries) is not in the direction of further unity and reliance on the Democratic party; but, on the contrary, it is a step away from, a form of incipient split in fact away from the capitalist party that leads from independent Negro action towards the arms of labor.
8. We must encourage the Negroes to undertake extra-parliamentary measures, where necessary, to enforce their rights; for the enforcement agency of the Supreme Court decision will be the mass action of the Negroes themselves, to begin with; such actions, for instance, as mass registration, mass open public voting by extra-parliamentary means if the regular governmental channels are refused or tampered with by the Southern oligarchy.
9. Enfranchisement and its application even through Negro primaries with a capitalist label today can represent an advance in Negro consciousness and organization, and give to the Negro masses a sense of growing strength, determination, power and organization—a psychological and political transformation highly important for the immediate needs and ultimate course of the Negro masses.
10. Our policy or advice to the Negroes, therefore, should be: Exercise your franchise. Enforce the Supreme Court decision by any means you think best at this juncture.

Organize and vote your convictions.

We recognize, hence, that only as the Negroes go through their initial political experiences and through such organizations as they have formed by their own efforts, will they learn to become selective politically, and reach finally class political views and organization.

11. Such a policy or advice on our part will make it easier to explain the need and meaning for the Negroes to give organized support and participation in independent political action in the form of a Labor Party, since we will have first taken cognizance of their special conditions and the need, in their eyes, for special actions.

6/5/44

Harry Allen

NEGROES AND THE SOUTHERN PRIMARIES

David Coolidge

The demand of Negroes for the right to participate in southern primaries has been given new prominence by the recent decision of the U.S. Supreme Court. This demand did not originate with this decision but has only been intensified for the reason that the Negroes take the position that their case has been strengthened by the declaration of the court that the practice of excluding them is illegal and unconstitutional. The Negroes proceed in this instance as do all those who begin with the assumption that bourgeois democracy can be made to work and that it is correct and efficacious to fight within that framework.

I. The demand of the Negroes for the right to vote in the southern Democratic primaries is a demand for the opportunity to exercise bourgeois democratic rights as set forth in the federal constitution.

1. Negroes do not have these rights in many southern states. In these states they are the only section of the population denied these rights. The exclusion of Negroes from the primaries is exclusively on grounds of race or color; is unique and is not comparable to the poll-tax exclusion which effects Negroes and poor whites alike.

2. The struggle of Negroes for right to participate in the primaries is an elementary struggle to lift themselves to the level of other population groups; a struggle to eliminate group political disability in relation to the political status of the rest of the population. It is a struggle to remove the differential which exists between Negroes North and South in the matter of political activity. This disability is suffered by Negroes as a whole in the states in question.

3. The demand for the right to participate in the primaries, of bourgeois-democratic parties, therefore is a demand for an elementary democratic right by all Negroes in southern states irrespective of intra-racial class lines.

4. It is incumbent upon northern Negroes to support this demand of southern Negroes. At bottom the struggle of the southern Negroes for the right to participate in the primaries of the bourgeois-democratic parties is of a similar nature to the struggle of Northern Negroes for equality in the North and aids in the unification of the struggle nationally.

II. Due to the above conditions it would be incorrect for Marxists to base their analyses and tactics solely on considerations appertaining only to the unique class needs of Negro proletarians.

1. In the matter at issue the democratic rights of the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Negroes must be recognized and protected.

2. The right of all Negroes to engage in the electoral apparatus and procedure of any party, to vote freely as they see fit, to become a candidate on the ticket of any party and to be voted for on the same terms and conditions as others must be recognized and protected.

3. In the South it is important also to recognize and defend the right of white people to vote for Negroes for any and all offices.

4. The Marxists must support and encourage those Negro organizations, particularly, formed for the purpose of breaking down the discriminatory practices in the South, which deny any and all democratic rights to the Negro people.

III. The road to and incentive to class struggle for Negroes, especially in the South, is through the struggle for such specific bourgeois-democratic rights as the right to vote, to participate in the regular primaries, and to run for office in the established political set-up. To ignore this in the name of some sort of "independence" is to forsake the real struggle as it is today.

1. In the course of this struggle it is the more militant among the Negro toilers who will take the lead in the necessary militant actions necessary to accomplish results. It is they also who will keep up a sustained struggle as the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois Negroes tend to more "orderly" and "safer" forms of pacivity.

2. Marxists on the scene, should there be any, participating in this struggle would have opportunity for most fruitful work. There would be recurring opportunity for them to pose before the Negroes, especially the proletarians, all the important questions of the bourgeois state, bourgeois democracy, bourgeois politics and the class interests of the Negro upper classes.

3. Winning the right to participate in the primaries is a continuing struggle. It is not settled by court decisions or even by constitutional provisions. This has been demonstrated in the South all through the decades since the emancipation of the Negroes. The struggle would not be ended even when the South formerly removes the present restrictions. Extra-legal measures would be resorted to which would engender physical conflict.

4. It is the duty of the labor movement of the South, especially the CIO (miners, textile and agricultural workers) to initiate and carry through with the Negroes, the struggle for the democratic rights for the Negro people. Right now the main fight of the labor movement is to link up the agitation against the poll-tax with the struggle of the Negroes for the right to enter the democratic primaries. The CIO should make this demand on the Democratic Party organization and its titular head, Roosevelt. The Marxists in the labor movement in the South would push this line at all times in the trade unions.

5. A proposal for the Negroes of the effected states to form "their own" labor party as a solution to the present difficulty even if such a step is procedurally possible. Such a proposal ignores several pertinent questions of varying degrees of validity. (a) it ignores the nature of the present struggle, which is an attempt on the part of Negroes, as Negroes to win a bourgeois-democratic right. Such a recommendation is a proposal to ignore the rights of the Negro petty-bourgeois

and bourgeois in the specific matter at issue. (b) It would be impossible to explain such a proposal to Negro proletarians and agricultural workers, who in this concrete matter feel themselves a unity with all Negroes, and correctly so. (c) In the concrete circumstances (psychologically, no groundwork done, etc.) it is an ad hoc proposal. (d) In reality it is not a proposal for the Negroes to form a labor party but a Negro party. That is precisely what the Negroes of S. C. were doing when they decided to send 18 delegates to the Democratic National Convention to contest the 18 white delegates.

6. The question of independent political action by Negroes in the South, as elsewhere, is not basically different from the same need of the white workers. If the propaganda of Marxists for independent political action is to be genuine, especially for the South, it must be directed primarily to the organized white workers at the present time, or at least to the trades unions in the CIO. They must take steps toward a labor party and urge the Negroes to join. The program of such a party must make Negro equality one of its planks.

IV. As a Marxist Party the WP is opposed to support of bourgeois-democratic parties. The question at issue here however is not a matter of the WP supporting or not supporting something. The WP does not exist nor does it have any members or influence in the S. There are no working class parties in the South. There is no movement of any kind there now for independent working class political action.

The real problem in certain states is not even the question of Negroes supporting bourgeois parties. To interpret the demand of Negroes for the right to vote in Democratic Party primaries or for the right to participate actively in such primaries, as support of the Democratic Party is only a species of formalistic radical bigotry. Negroes, especially the more aggressive, would consider their insistence on entering these primaries, as opposition to the Democratic Party, especially in the South.

We should note here that in a sense, the primaries in such states as Texas, Mississippi, Ga. and South Carolina, are not fully bourgeois-democratic primaries. They are different from such primaries in the North and even from some southern states, say Tenn., Va. and Ky. With the elimination of the poll-tax and the inclusion they would be completely bourgeois-democratic.

Therefore to abstract formal notions from the concrete situation and base a position on such abstraction would be the most sterile and sectarian nonsense. The South is not the North. Marxists would not have the same outlook for the N. To take the identical position; for instance in connection with the Powell-Speaks Democratic-Republican contest in Harlem would be social and political opportunism covered over with "support of the Negro people."

Whether or not the WP comes out in LA to say that Negroes should vote in the Democratic primaries in the South is not the basic question. It is difficult however to understand on what ground the WP would advise against such participation, at the present time and in the concrete circumstances. The Marxists must support the struggle of the Negroes, all the Negroes, for their democratic rights. They must use this struggle to separate the Negro toilers from other Negroes. They must use this struggle to achieve the unity of Negro and white workers. They must use this struggle to lay the base for independent political action and the formation of the labor party.

AMENDMENT TO THE NEGRO RESOLUTION

When the Resolution on the Negro Question was sent in, I stated that there were three sections still to follow: (1) on Negro chauvinism, (2) on the Negro question as an international question, and (3) a program of action. These are here appended.

I. Negro Chauvinism

The history of the Negro in the U.S. is a history of the increasing race consciousness and a constantly increasing desire to vindicate his past and the achievements and qualifications of the Negro race as a race. This is an inevitable result of his position in American society and is not only a powerful but a familiar concomitant of the struggle of nationally oppressed groups everywhere to liberate themselves. It does not grow less with the social development of the oppressed and the oppressing groups. On the contrary, it increases in direct ratio with the possibilities of liberation. This was recognized by the SWP in its 1939 convention when it adopted a resolution which stated in part: "...the awakening political consciousness of the Negro not unnaturally takes the form of a desire for independent action uncontrolled by whites. The Negroes have long felt and more than ever feel today the urge to create their own organization under their own leaders and thus assert, not only in theory but in action, their claim to complete equality with other American citizens. Such a desire is legitimate and even when it takes the form of a rather aggressive chauvinism is to be welcomed. Black chauvinism in America today is merely the natural excess of the desire for equality while white American chauvinism, the expression of racial domination, is essentially reactionary."

So clear is this development that today even the bourgeoisie is recognizing it. In An American Dilemma by Gunnar Myrdal, despite its petty-bourgeois humanitarian attitude, there has at last appeared a serious, thorough and, in many respects, authoritative study of the Negro question. One of the final conclusions is that: "Negroes are beginning to form a self-conscious 'nation within the nation', defining ever more clearly their fundamental grievances against white America." Such a movement with such deep historical roots must inevitably bring exaggerations, excesses, and ideological trends for which the only possible name is chauvinism. This trend undoubtedly has dangers. Marxism both in theory and in practice has demonstrated that the only way to overcome them is to recognize the fundamentally progressive tendency of this tendency and to distinguish sharply between the chauvinism of the oppressed and the chauvinism of the oppressor. The duty of the Party is not only to lead the legitimate aspirations of the Negro masses but also to educate organized labor as a whole as to the legitimacy of the feelings of the great masses of the Negro people and the great contribution which this can become to the struggle for socialism. Despite all apparent difficulties, a bold and confident policy on the part of our Party has every possibility of success for the simple reason that whereas in Europe the chauvinism which is allied to national movements usually aimed at a separation from the oppressing power, in the U.S. the race consciousness and chauvinism of the Negro represent fundamentally a consolidation of his forces for the purpose of integration into American society.

II. The Negro Question as an International Question

The Negro question in the U.S. during the 19th century was perhaps that

question, among all others, which became a matter of interest and action to the international proletariat. The emancipation of the Negro slaves and the Civil War are indissolubly connected with the foundation of the First International. The Third International recognized this aspect of the Negro question when in its Resolution on the Negro Question at the Fourth Congress it devoted a special section to the importance of the role which the Negroes in the U.S. could play in the emancipation of Negroes all over the world and particularly in Africa. Today the process of historical development and capitalist disintegration have carried the Negro question in the US a stage further in its international relations. Not only in Britain does the Negro question occupy a foremost place as a test of American democracy but all over the world and particularly in the Oriental countries the situation and struggle of the Negro people in the United States has become one of the criteria by which oppressed nationalities test the possibilities of their own emancipation. Among the American Negroes themselves the role and fate of India, of China and of Burma in their struggles for emancipation is recognized as being connected with their own struggles. The Negro press has consistently devoted many pages to the struggles of the Oriental people and the Pittsburgh Courier has two regular weekly columns, one by an Indian and one by a Chinese. Negro organizations, in their recently issued manifesto to both the Republican and Democratic conventions, made "the equality of China" with all the Allied nations, one of their fundamental demands. It is the function of the Fourth International to develop and to clarify these instinctive strivings of the peoples towards internationalism. With the utmost seriousness the Party must recognize and expound the historic roots of this development and direct it towards the education and organization of the international proletariat and its present allies in their struggle for world socialism.

III. Program of Action

On pages 12-17 of the original Resolution there is stated a program of activity for the Workers Party in the organized labor movement, among Negroes, in the Negro nationalist movements, in regard to the Negro petty bourgeois and, most important of all, in regard to the Negroes and the Labor Party. The following supplement merely concretizes the above in certain directions for immediate activity:

1. The first requisite is the systematic education of the Party on the Negro question. In the period which we are entering, the period of world upheaval and social crises in America, the Party members must above all on this difficult and complicated question have a clear theoretical orientation. In the NEW INTERNATIONAL and in internal bulletins there must be a series of informed studies and discussions on the Marxist interpretation of the development of the Negro in the history of the United States. Such studies do not exist in the U. S. at all except for some beginnings by the Stalinists. It is impossible for the Party to make any serious and continued progress in Negro work without some such preparation. For the time being we merely outline a few of the topics which can be immediately considered: (a) the Negroes in the Civil War. Trotsky always insisted that it was impossible to appraise the Negro situation in the U. S. now without an appraisal of their role in the Civil War. (b) the Negroes in the organized labor movement, their historical development in this movement and the interrelation of the Negro community to these struggles. (c) Negro organizations in the recent past and in the present, particularly the Garvey movement as the only Negro mass movement which the U.S. history can show. (d) the Negro in Southern agriculture, (e) Negro social development and political struggles in Africa and in the

West Indies, and (f) the concrete experiences of the W.P. in Negro work. These studies, for the most part, are, first of all, matters of fact but also matters of interpretation. It is practically a virgin field not only for the Party but for all Marxists in the U.S. They are therefore and for a long time must mainly matters of discussion. It is through attention to these questions that the party will educate its members and enable them to represent Marxism among the Negroes and within the ranks of organized labor. It is by this means also that the Party will be able to influence and to direct the always alert interest of a nationally oppressed people to whatever deals with its national oppression, however unpopular or distasteful the general ideas of a revolutionary group might otherwise be. As a first prerequisite it is necessary to publish the notes and observations of Trotsky on the Negro question. (2) The National Committee must, in accordance with the practice and tradition of the Bolshevik movement, organize a special Negro Department to deal with the general work among Negroes. This work must in no way be subordinated with the work among Negroes in the organized labor movement which is more specifically the work of the Trade Union Department. The work of both departments must be coordinated. The Negro Department should be responsible for a special column in the newspaper on the Negro question and should invite the participation of non-Party members in its theoretical work. There is a great field for development here today.

3. Work among the Negro masses; (a) establishment, if at all possible, and at the earliest time possible, of a full-time worker in S. E. Missouri. (b) publication of a pamphlet of the Party program on the Negro question and another pamphlet addressed especially to the Negro masses, on the same subject. This work is to be coordinated with the regular Party work among Negroes throughout the country and within Negro organizations.

July 31, 1944

---J. R. Johnson

TOWARD A PARTY PERSPECTIVE

World War II marks the end of an epoch in the history of capitalism. Empires, nations, classes, parties and ideological groupings are confronted with new tasks and find themselves in changed relationship to old ones. Every political problem we discuss impresses itself upon us as being in the first place a problem of impending change of a swift and sweeping character. All of this impresses upon current thought what has popularly come to be known as "post-war planning". The Marxist knows it is far deeper and more fundamental than that. It is a problem of girding oneself for a new historical epoch with new tasks and new problems. Those who enter the new period with out-moded concepts and with habits of thought born in an out-lived past will be left aside by the stream of events.

In this sense the Workers Party does not have a perspective. We have grappled with the political aspects of one. The recent convention was occupied in the main with two important questions that dealt with the political "shape of things to come." These were the misnamed "national question" -- really, the coming European Revolution -- and the Labor Party -- really, the coming transformation of the American workingclass. We brought to both of these problems the rich political and theoretical experience of the Trotskyist movement. But also in keeping with the tradition of the movement, we spent 95% of the effort in charting the course of coming events and 5% in planning how we can affect these events.

For decades now we have played the role of clairvoyant soothsayers warning the workingclass against the "Ides of March." From China to Spain, from "Socialism in one country" to the People's Front we have seen our views fully vindicated -- by workingclass defeats. Our whole generation was schooled in this process and carried along with their political education the unexpressed feeling that our role as powerless prophets in the workers' movement was somehow inevitable.

The Trotskyist movement is now 20 years old on the international scene, and 15 years old in this country. Few of the pioneers remain in the ranks. Yet in the ranks and among the sympathizers are many who have steadfastly carried on for five, eight, and ten years. This despite the repeated defeats and repeated disappointments. Germany, Austria, France, Spain; each in turn a class battlefield, each in turn a new hope, each in turn a bitter disappointment. And more bitter for us than for others, for we knew that defeat was not caused by the overpowering weight of the enemy but by the stupidity and cowardice of the leadership.

Our profound convictions instilled by a Marxist program, proved virtually unshakable by our political opponents. The numbers of our adherents who embraced Stalinism, reformism, centrism, or anarchism are insignificant. Yet hundreds and probably thousands tired of the seemingly hopeless struggle and dropped by the wayside. "No political differences", they said. But they found a dozen and one personal reasons for leaving. Yet, upon reflection, it is not surprising that so many tired and left. What is surprising is that so many remained. History has few examples to compare with the 20 years struggle of our movement to survive against the combined pressure of many enemies. Barely tolerated in the bourgeois democracies, persecuted in the fascist dictatorships and colonial empires, and ruthlessly exterminated in Russia and wherever else the Stalinists had the power, the movement survived solely by a deep conviction in its program. Executions in Russia,

assassinations in France, Spain, Switzerland, and Mexico and imprisonment in practically every nation of the world highlighted the persecution of Trotskyists. Less dramatic but just as telling in the daily lives of members in this country, as in others where the movement remained legal, was the intolerance against Trotskyists, as uncompromising revolutionists, practiced by governmental agencies, employers and trade union officials. "Trotskyism" was a reason for not being given a WPA job in New York and "Trotskyism" was a reason for evicting sharecroppers from government settlements in Missouri.

In recompense there was neither a "one-sixth of the world" to look to, nor a vast trade union apparatus, nor even a "Socialist Milwaukee." We lived and survived by our program.

But a political movement must base itself upon a perspective of progress. No movement can grow, or even live, whose program offered no hope and foretold only doom. Our movement does have hope. In the last analysis that is what our program represents for mankind. Trotsky once referred to the fact that Marxism "is saturated with the optimism of progress." But this reduces itself in our thinking to the view that "when Socialism finally comes it can only be through our program."

(Typical of how our psychological conditioning through years of disappointments leads us to approach problems was the warning voiced in leading circles of the party after Pearl Harbor when discussing the probable length of the war: "Don't look for revolutions too soon. If you do you will be disappointed and demoralized." In place of such possible disappointment there was advanced the "sober and safe" perspective that the war would go on for 10 or 15 years before a military decision would emerge and that it was utopian to expect revolutions before that occurred.)

How long can a movement exist with this perspective? Probably indefinitely. But it will finally exist in a vacuum of its own creation without any relation to the social forces that would history.

However, the more pertinent question today is whether it is necessary to continue with such a "perspective". Is it necessary that between our daily political tasks and the future when our views will be accepted by millions there remain a gray void where a perspective cannot penetrate?

What of the immediate post-war period? Will those specific features of current revolutionary Marxism we know as Trotskyism be left behind in the epoch which gave them birth as the revolutionary Marxist program once more becomes the program of masses in motion? Will we know how and when to exchange the critic's pen for the conductor's baton or, at least, a first fiddle? How will this come about? Will it "just happen"? Is the transition from propaganda sect to mass party just a planless accruing of forces? Or can we chart a course for our party as we do so ably for classes, nations and for history generally? Can we plan the stages and steps and consciously direct the party through them?

This article presents an affirmative answer to the last question. It is my view that it is not only possible but indispensable. However, the article will not offer the solution. It will seek to indicate along what lines, in my view, the solution lies. The solution will not be found by any one person. It will be a product of the movement. It is my hope that

this article will direct thought to the problem and initiate a process whereby the solution will be found.

In this sense it is a continuation and general summation of three previous documents in which I sought to deal with partial aspects of the problem. These were:

- "Transitional Program and Socialist Agitation," June, 1942
- "Toward a Mass Revolutionary Party," June, 1943
- "Popularizing Socialism on the American Scene," January, 1944

Each of these deepened my understanding of the problem, especially in making me aware of the historical roots of the question. It is now apparent to me that the question could not be answered beyond the limits of the above documents without a more serious attempt to outline the historical fundamentals that underlie the whole question of the future of our party. Precisely because we stand at the close of a distinct epoch in the history of the workingclass, an understanding of our party and its future must begin with an evaluation of the epoch which produced our movement. To begin with 1940 and the founding of the Workers Party would be very artificial and yield little. For the founding of our party was but another stage, though a very important one, in the history of the Trotskyist movement. It is in the historical meaning of "Trotskyism" and its movement that we must seek the historical roots of our analysis of a Party perspective.

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