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TO THE R.W.L. 4TH CONVENTION

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Theoretical Organ of the  
International Contact Commission

# INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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## Can France Avert Revolution?

The defeat of France and the emergence of a puppet dictatorial regime under the domination of German imperialism, again raises a number of fundamental questions. A negative, defeatist attitude has taken root among some people — the attitude which accompanies every defeat sustained by the proletariat. This defeatism is manifested in all sorts of "new" theories. Just as in the case of the Spanish defeat, the present developments in Europe are pushing many organizations and individuals further to the right.

The development of fascist methods in France, the liquidation of the trade union movement and of all civil liberties, certainly reveals the miserable plight of the working class. But a clear understanding of fundamental Marxian principles will show that there is no reason for despair.

### FASCISM AND COMMUNISM

In December of 1938 we wrote as follows: "The Hitler victory at Munich has accelerated the internal and external contradictions of French imperialism. The strike wave is a symptom of the rising struggle between COMMUNISM AND FASCISM IN FRANCE... The lightning-like change of cabinets is merely a reflection of the confusion, disorganization in the ranks of the bourgeoisie as the decisive moment approaches, as its economic and imperialist house of cards tumbles to the ground and reveals the bankruptcy of bourgeois democracy in solving the crisis... Parliament in France is a dead institution. It may still gasp a few more moments in history, but its complete demise is only a matter of historical minutes".

On the basis of the Marxian method we were thus able to predict that:

- 1—Bourgeois democracy in France was paving the way for fascism.
- 2—Unless the proletariat — Communism — took power, fascism would come.

Since that time — Munich — the internal and external contradictions in France have intensified. In preparing for the war, the French bourgeoisie had to try to stifle the militancy which the workers showed in the great sit-

down strikes and in the struggle for the 40-hour week. This task was partially accomplished by the People's Front, actively aided by the 2nd and 3rd Internationals; all these combined to tie the proletariat to the capitalist state. The uncompleted task was continued by the bonapartist Daladier regime, which took away most of the rights gained by the masses in years of struggle; it outlawed strikes, put an end to trade union militancy, censored the workers' press, placed a ban on hundreds of workers' organizations, etc. The People's Front had sapped the workers' militancy by indirect means, thus preparing for the frontal attack which Daladier led against the entire working class.

Thus the internal contradictions of French imperialism drove it relentlessly toward more and more brutal dictatorial rule that could only result in naked dictatorship. At the same time France's external contradictions required that the same process be utilized in the struggle with German imperialism for domination of the continent.

### HYPOCRITICAL BOURGEOISIE

Nevertheless the French bourgeoisie raised the demagogic cry of "democracy against fascism", although every action they took was a step away from bourgeois democracy. At the same time, the French Marxists, small in numbers, never ceased to call for defeat of "their own" bourgeoisie, even though this implied temporary victory for the "enemy" imperialists.

The Marxian force was unable to win the masses for the civil war that this slogan counterposed to the capitalist war. Hence the inevitable occurred. In the epoch of capitalism in decay, the war made open dictatorship a necessity for the French bourgeoisie, if they were to continue as the ruling class. Such an open dictatorship is a big step on the road to complete Fascism. Again the predictions of the Marxists are confirmed. Fascism must supersede democracy as the FORM of bourgeois rule — unless the proletariat seizes and maintains its own power.

What are the precise theoretical questions raised by the defeat of France and the fascist rule instituted over the French workers? 1) What relation does the defeat of the French armies have to the class relations within France? And 2) Can German imperialism stabilize the capitalist regime by complete domination of Europe? The defeatists, having thrown Marxism away as a tool for action, answer the first question by a gesture of despair. To the second question they reply with some revised version of Kautsky's outworn "super-imperialism".

### WHY THE FRENCH SURRENDER?

Three significant sources reveal the motives behind the capitulation of the French bourgeoisie:

1. General Petain: "If we do not surrender there will be a workers' defense of Paris and mutinies throughout the army".

2. Ambassador Bullitt: "Weygand, Laval, and Petain have saved the country from Communism".

3. A confidential report by a leading AP journalist to his editor stated that surrender was occasioned by three factors: fear of an immediate French revolution, fear of a German revolution if the struggle were prolonged, and desire to continue doing business.

Moreover, the French bourgeoisie dread moving the government to Paris "for fear of a popular uprising".

Thus the French bourgeoisie show that they fear the proletariat more than they do Hitler; they use Hitler's methods against the proletariat.

From Peoples Frontism to channelize the revolutionary ferment... to Bonapartism which brutally tried to strangle it and prepare for war... to an emerging Fascist regime, resting on German arms, which is determined to drown the proletariat in blood: such is the course of the French bourgeoisie and their decayed order. In France the near-fascist regime comes with the aid of German Imperialism, just as German fascism was established with the aid of French and British Imperialism.

### CAN GERMANY STABILIZE EUROPE?

The problem of economic stabilization has been posed more sharply than ever by the conquest of France. The Marxists pointed out

in 1933 that Hitler could temporarily stabilize German economy on the basis of gearing production to war needs. But the actual outbreak of the world imperialist war on September 1, 1939, marked the close of this brief interlude of stabilization. A new period of stability can be attained only by military conquest and by the liquidation of proletarian revolution. And the obstacles in the path of stability are insurmountable in this epoch.

Even France itself cannot eliminate the threat of revolution. Nor can it overcome the economic decay which culminated in the defeat of its armies and the formation of a puppet government. France's gold supply is in the hands of the German conqueror; half its territory and more than half of its industry are gone; it must feed thousands of war refugees and hundreds of thousands of German soldiers; its colonies and spheres of influence will be wrested away step by step. Add to all this the certain famine of the coming winter, and it becomes obvious that French capitalism is doomed to at least partial bankruptcy.

### SOCIAL FERMENT IMMINENT

The German bourgeoisie clearly see the social threat inherent in this objective situation. Hence they have permitted Petain to maintain a large standing army to preserve "law and order".

But cannot Hitler consolidate Europe and stabilize its economy? NO! The fascist "organization" of Europe can take place (even assuming military success) only in so far as Germany can extend starvation and the iron heel. This process, instead of "stabilizing" economy and politics, serves to **accelerate** all the inter-imperialist and class antagonisms.

Not only must Germany defeat Britain as a first step in this direction; she must isolate American influence in Europe and the world. And this is impossible without a military struggle. In this struggle even a "victory" would increase the already terrific strain on Germany to the breaking point.

IF Germany could win the war today without further economic destruction, IF she could reduce America to a second rate power WITHOUT MILITARY CONFLICT, IF she could take the Ukraine and reduce the Soviet Union to a colony and take India and other parts of Asia without military losses and resultant class conflicts — IF all these impossible things — even

then the stabilization of Europe would be impossible. The inherent internal contradictions of capitalism — and especially the great contradiction between social production and private appropriation of the product — inevitably spell the doom of the whole capitalist system.

### STABILIZATION IMPOSSIBLE

But in life itself, disregarding all these hypotheses, the objective situation is becoming more and more revolutionary. The very defeats of the French bourgeoisie breed the proletarian revolution. The French workers find themselves betrayed and oppressed more intensely than ever. The defeat inevitably entails the economic collapse of France. The bosses cannot rule in the old way, and the workers and oppressed masses are set in motion against their oppressors because the regime is absolutely intolerable to the overwhelming majority.

Nor does this mean that a "victorious" Germany is exempt from the revolutionary upheaval. There can be no "victory" today. Military gains are won at the expense of the whole economic structure. The decay of capitalism means that the contradictions of the system become sharper everywhere. Defeat facilitates revolution, but "victory" only postpones it for a time.

Stabilization is impossible; only greater barbarism and starvation on an increasing mass basis can be the products of continuing capitalist decay. Thus the proletarian revolution is inevitably generated and must soon burst forth to burst the confines of the capitalist system.

In this struggle the might of the French proletariat, as well as that of the German workers, will yet be felt and will play its great historic role.

# Lenin's Position On Imperialist War

## A GUIDE FOR ACTION TODAY

The most fundamental question of the present-day struggle of the proletariat for emancipation is the question of the continuation of the class struggle in the period of the imperialist war, i. e., the question of revolutionary defeatism.

Three weeks before the present imperialist war began, when the INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION was first organized, the initial issue of INTERNATIONAL NEWS presented the Marxian position on revolutionary defeatism. In addition, since then, we have dealt with other aspects of the question, particularly in regard to the revisionist organiza-

tions of the working class.

Now, as the imperialist war enters its first year, and particularly with the continued advances of German imperialism, the pressure of the bourgeoisie deepens in the labor movement.

Thus the necessity for a restatement of the Marxist struggle against imperialist war. Just as in the first World War the forces of revolutionary Marxism under Lenin had to fight against the stream for their position, so today the INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION must raise its organizationally weak voice with

the same powerful political lever against the maelstrom of capitalist reaction.

In this article we confine ourselves to quoting material from Lenin — material which is just as timely today as when it was first penned during the last war.

### "ON THE NATURE OF THE WAR"

"The present war is of an imperialist character. This war is the outcome of the conditions of an epoch when capitalism has reached the highest stage of its development; when the greatest significance is attached not only to the export of commodities, but also to the export of capital; when the combination of production units in cartels and the internationalization of economic life, has assured considerable dimensions; when colonial politics have brought about an almost total apportionment of the globe among the colonial powers (i. e., imperialist powers controlling colonies — Editors); when the productive forces of world capitalism have long ago outgrown the limited boundaries of national and state divisions; when objective conditions for the realization of Socialism have perfectly ripened". (1)

On the basis of this fundamental economic analysis of the nature of the war — which is even truer of the present war than of the last — Lenin proceeds to explain the precise relationship of forces and to refute the lies of the bourgeois about the cause of the war:

"The Anglo-French bourgeoisie is deceiving the people when it says that it wages war for the freedom of the peoples, including Belgium; in reality, it wages war for the sake of holding on to the colonies which it has stolen on a large scale. The German imperialists

would free Belgium, etc., forthwith, were the English and the French willing to share with them the colonies on the basis of 'justice'. It is a peculiarity of the present situation that the fate of the colonies is being decided by war on the continent... Germany itself, however, is waging war not for the liberation, but for the oppression of nations. It is not the business of Socialists to help the younger and stronger robber (Germany) to rob the older and fatter bandits, but the Socialists must utilize the struggle between the bandits to overthrow all of them". (2)

And, following Lenin, we state: It is not the business of revolutionary Marxists to help the bandits who cloak themselves in democratic garb against those who are fascist in form. We must "utilize the struggle between the bandits to overthrow all of them".

### STRUGGLE AGAINST SOCIAL CHAUVINISM

It is precisely in the carrying out of these aims that the revolutionary Marxists must intrinsigently expose and struggle against social chauvinism.

What is social chauvinism and why must we struggle against it? Let us hear from Lenin the analyses that were historically vindicated in the last imperialist war and post-war period:

"Social chauvinism is adherence to the idea of 'defending the fatherland' in the present war. From this follows repudiation of the class struggle in war time, voting for military appropriations, etc. In practice the social-chauvinists conduct an anti-proletarian bourgeois policy, because in practice they insist

not on the 'defense of the fatherland' in the sense of fighting against the oppression of a foreign nation, but upon the 'right' of one or the other of the 'great' nations to rob the colonies and oppress the peoples". (3)

"SOCIAL CHAUVINISM IS OPPORTUNISM BROUGHT TO COMPLETION... By social chauvinism we understand the acceptance of the defense of the fatherland idea in the present imperialist war, the justification of an alliance between the Socialists, the bourgeoisie and the governments of 'our' countries in this war, a refusal to preach and support proletarian-revolutionary activities against 'our' bourgeoisie, etc... Opportunism means sacrificing to the temporary interests of an insignificant minority of the workers the fundamental interests of the masses or, in other words, an alliance of a part of the workers with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the proletariat". (4)

"The economic basis of 'social-chauvinism' (this term being more precise than the term social-patriotism, as the latter embellishes the evil) and of opportunism is the same, namely, an alliance of an insignificant section of the 'top' of the labor movement with its national bourgeoisie against the class that is exploited by the bourgeoisie. Social-chauvinism is opportunism brought to its logical conclusions.

"The political essence of social-chauvinism and opportunism is the same. It expresses itself in class collaboration, repudiation of proletarian dictatorship, rejection of revolutionary action, obeisance to the bourgeoisie and bourgeois legality, lack of confidence in the proletariat, confidence in the bourgeoisie. The political ideas are the same, the political principles of tactics are also the same". (5)

**"UNITY WITH THE OPPORTUNISTS IS AN ALLIANCE OF THE WORKERS WITH THEIR NATIONAL BOURGEOISIE AND A SPLIT IN THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY WORKING CLASS".**

"The war has proven the inadmissability of this combination in the future... Unity with the opportunists has become nothing but hypocrisy... To keep **united** with opportunists at the present time means **practically** to subjugate the working class to 'its' bourgeoisie, to make an alliance with it for the oppression of other nations and for the struggle for the privileges of a great nation; at the same time it means splitting the revolutionary proletariat of all countries... Social-Chauvinism is opportunism ripened to such an extent that the existence of this bourgeois abscess inside of the Socialist parties, as it was **hitherto**, become impossible... Unity with opportunism means unity of the proletariat with its national bourgeoisie, i. e., it means submission to the latter, it means a split in the international revolutionary working class" ... (6)

With the preciseness and scientific clarity that was his chief characteristic, Lenin outlined the **economic** base of opportunism, its **political** content and showed why unity with it was absolutely impermissible. When we now survey the leading political forces on an international scale, and apply Lenin's analyses to them, it becomes exceptionally obvious that every word he wrote receives additional verification in the treachery of the present opportunist forces.

The Second International continues its age-old policy of support of "its own" bourgeoisie (except in the Fascist countries where the bourgeoisie does not and cannot, at present, use their support; hence the Socialists clamor for a return to a "democratic" regime where the bourgeoisie will grant them the "democratic" right to mislead the working class) on the same opportunist program, with the same economic base with which Lenin dealt. The Third International, long perverted into the tool of Stalinism, supports that bourgeoisie which will enable Stalinism to maintain its precarious position; The London Bureau (IWFAP) Brandler-Lovestone-Pivert-ILP menage are social-pacifist.

The Trotskyites present a hopelessly confused verbal stand for Lenin's position which is negated both in theory (by speaking of defeatism only if the party is "strong" enough to carry it out), and practice: refusal to prepare for illegal work in Belgium, unity with the opportunists through "French turn" destruction of the political and organizational independence of the party; support of the Czech bourgeois state against Germany instead of independent working class action; support of pacifist bourgeois bills and referendums, support of third capitalist parties in America; and, on the part of the Shachtman international minority, a negation of revolutionary defeatism by wanting to apply it precisely where it does not apply, against the Soviet Union.

Only the forces of the INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION present and carry out Lenin's position for international struggle of the working class against all the imperialists, and against their opportunist agents in the working class. Just as Lenin called for the building of a Third International, so today we are the advance guard of the New Communist (4) International; and for the same reasons: "...confronted with the task of organizing the forces of the proletariat for a revolutionary onslaught on the capitalist governments, for civil war against the bourgeoisie of all countries, for political power, for Socialism". (7)

#### "TURN THE IMPERIALIST WAR INTO CIVIL WAR"

"The proletarian slogan must be civil war.

"Objectively, from the fundamental change in the situation of Europe, there follows such a slogan for the epoch of mass war. The same slogan follows from the Basle resolution.

"We can neither 'promise' civil war nor 'decree it', but it is our duty to work in this direction, if need be, for a very long time". (8)

"Turning the imperialist war into civil war is the only correct proletarian slogan" (9)

"There is only one practical question: the victory or the defeat of our own country', Kautsky, the servant of the opportunists, wrote in unison with Guesde, Plekhanov and Co. This is true; yes, if we were to forget Socialism and class struggle, this would be true. But if we do not forget Socialism, it is untrue! There is another practical question: whether we should perish in a war between slaveholders,

ourselves blind and helpless slaves, or whether we should perish for the 'attempts at fraternization' between the workers, with the aim of casting off slavery?

"Such is, in reality, the practical question. (10)

"It is impossible to know whether a powerful revolutionary movement will develop immediately after this war, or during it, etc. At any rate, only work in this direction deserves the name of Socialist work. The slogan that generalises and directs this work, that helps to unite and consolidate those who wish to aid the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat against its government and its bourgeoisie, is the slogan of civil war". (11)

"The only correct expression of this task is the slogan 'Turn the imperialist war into civil war'. All consistent class struggle in time of war, all 'mass actions' earnestly conducted must inevitably lead to this. We cannot know whether in the first or in the second imperialist war between the great nations, whether during or after it, a strong revolutionary movement will flare up. Whatever the case may be, it is our absolute duty systematically and unflinchingly to work in that particular direction". (12)

And civil war was proved to be the only correct task; the systematic and unflinching work of the Bolsheviks did lead to the flaring up of a strong revolutionary movement. Now, owing to the terrific ebbing of this movement, now in the period of the second imperialist war, "all consistent class struggle in time of war must inevitably lead to this"; to this "absolute duty" the INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION is irrevocably dedicated.

#### "DEFEAT OF 'ONE'S OWN' GOVERNMENT IN IMPERIALIST WAR"

"The advocates of victory of 'one's own' government in the present war, as well as the advocates of the slogan 'Neither victory nor defeat', proceed equally from the standpoint of social-chauvinism. A revolutionary class in a reactionary war cannot help wishing the defeat of its government, it cannot fail to see the connection between the government's military reverses and the increased opportunity for overthrowing it. Only a bourgeois who believes that the war started by the governments will necessarily end as a war between governments, and who wishes it to be so, finds 'ridiculous' or 'absurd' the idea that the Social-

ists of all the belligerent countries should express their wish that all 'their' governments be defeated. On the contrary, such expression would coincide with the hidden thoughts of every class-conscious worker, and would lie along the line of our activity which tends to turn the imperialist war into civil war". (13)

#### PRACTICAL ACTIONS LEADING TOWARDS DEFEAT"

Counterposing civil war of the workers to imperialist war of the bourgeoisie Lenin immediately concretized this concept with the practical strategy to achieve it.

"When we say revolutionary action in war time against one's own government, we indisputably mean not only the wish for its defeat, but practical actions leading towards such defeat. ...this slogan alone means a consistent appeal to revolutionary action against one's own government in war time. Without such action, millions of the most revolutionary phrases concerning 'war against war and conditions, etc.' are not worth a penny." ...The opponents of the defeat slogan are simply afraid of themselves when they do not wish to realize the most obvious fact of the inseparable connection between revolutionary propaganda against the government and actions leading to its defeat". (14)

"Revolution in war time is civil war. Transformation of war between governments into civil war is, on the one hand, facilitated by military reverses ('defeats') of the government on the other hand it is impossible to strive in practice toward such a transformation without at the same time working towards military defeat". (15)

"An understanding concerning revolutionary actions within even one single country, not to speak of a number of countries, can be realized only by the force of the example of earnest revolutionary actions, by their being launched, by their development. It is impossible, however, to launch them without wishing the government defeat, and without contributing to such a defeat. The change from imperialist war to civil war cannot be 'made', as it is impossible to 'make' a revolution,— it grows out of a multiplicity of diverse phenomena, phases, traits, characteristics, consequences of the imperialist war. Such growth is impossible without a series of military reverses and de-

feats of those governments which received blows from 'their own' oppressed classes.

...."To repudiate the defeat slogan means to reduce one's revolutionary actions to an empty phrase or sheer hypocrisy". (16)

"The only policy of a real, not verbal, breaking of 'civil peace', of accepting the class struggle, is for the proletariat to take advantage of the difficulties of the government and its bourgeoisie with the aim of overthrowing them. This, however, cannot be achieved, it cannot be striven at, without wishing the defeat of one's own government, without contributing to such a defeat". (17)

#### UNDERSTAND HOW TO ORGANIZE

"Today there is no revolutionary situation present; there are no such conditions as would cause a ferment among the masses or heighten their activities; today you are given an election ballot — take it. Understand how to organize for it, to hit your enemies with it, and not to place men in soft parliamentary berths who cling to their seat in fear of prison. Tomorrow you are deprived of the election ballot, you are given a rifle and a splendid machine gun equipped according to the last word of machine technique — take this weapon of death and destruction; do not listen to the sentimental whiners who are afraid of war. Much has been left in the world that must be destroyed by fire and iron for the liberation of the working class. And if bitterness and despair grow in the working class, if a revolutionary situation is at hand, prepare to organize new organizations and utilize these so useful weapons of death and destruction against your own government and your bourgeoisie.

"This is not easy, to be sure. It will demand difficult preparatory activities. It will demand grave sacrifices. This is a new species of organization and struggle that one must learn, and learning is never done without errors and defeats. The relation of this species of class struggle to participation in election is the same as storming a fortress is to maneuvering, marching, or lying in the trenches. This species of struggle is placed on the order of the day in history very infrequently, but its significance and its consequences are felt for decades. Single days when such methods can and must be put on the programme of struggle are equal to scores of years of other historic epochs". (18)

## "IN THIS ALONE LIES SALVATION"

This is the analysis of the cause and nature of the imperialist war, this is a statement of the tasks and duty of revolutionary Marxists, this is the strategy and tactics to achieve that duty. This is the core of INTERNATIONAL CONTACT COMMISSION'S position against the imperialist war.

There are no guarantees of success but it is the only road consistent with the program of Marxism and the tasks of the working class.

All quotations are from Lenin's Collected Works, volume xviii, **The Imperialist War.**

- 1—Conference of Foreign Sections of RS-DLP, pp. 145-146.
- 2—Socialism and War, pp. 223-224.
- 3—Ibid., p. 226.
- 4—Ibid., p. 229; Collapse of Second International, pp. 305-306.
- 5—Opportunism and Collapse of Second International, p. 389.
- 6—Socialism and War, pp. 230-231; Collapse of Second International, p. 307; Opportunism and Collapse of Second International, p. 390.
- 7—Position and Tasks of Socialist International, p. 89.

"If perish we must, let us perish in the struggle for our own cause, for the cause of the workers, for the Socialist revolution, and not for the interests of the capitalists, landowners, and Tsars — this is what every class conscious worker sees and feels. Revolutionary Social-Democratic (Marxist) work may be difficult at present, but it is possible. It progresses in the whole world, and in this alone lies salvation.

**"Long live the world brotherhood of the workers, and an international revolution of the proletariat!" (19)**

- 8—Letter to Shlyapnikov, p. 75.
- 9—War and Russian Social-Democracy, p. 82.
- 10—Civil War Slogan Illustrated, p. 161.
- 11—Collapse of Second International, p. 320.
- 12—Socialism and War, p. 232.
- 13—Ibid., p. 234.
- 14—Defeat of "Our" Government, pp. 197, 198, 199.
- 15—Ibid., p. 198.
- 16—Ibid., pp. 199-200.
- 17—Ibid., p. 200.
- 18—Collapse of Second International, pp. 316-317.
- 19—Appeal on the War, p. 213.

August 5, 1940.

# Letter of the I.C.C. to R.W.L. Convention

Fourth Convention  
Revolutionary Workers League of U. S.

Greetings:

The provisional committee of the International Contact Commission sends its greetings to the Fourth Convention of the Revolutionary Workers League of U. S.

Since the formation of the Contact Commission your section has been the only one able to hold a convention. We hope your meeting will be a new starting point for greater work and greater consolidation of our forces. Your convention is held at a time when all other sections and sympathetic groups of the International are living under war regimes of participants in the imperialist war. The days for your section are numbered, too, and before long U. S. involvement in the military sphere of the war will bring with it the outlawing of your organization as well.

We note with satisfaction the main political documents of the P. C. and the last Plenum which are to be presented to the convention. We are glad to state that this material is an elaboration of the Fourteen Points of the Contact Commission and is in fundamental agreement with our declaration. The emphasis placed under a clear understanding of the position on the imperialist war (revolutionary defeatism) and on the Soviet Union (the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and its agents, Stalinist and others) is a focal point for any program in the revolutionary upheav-

als the war breakdown is preparing.

Due to the relation of forces of the situation that history has thrust in your hands, your section has the gravest tasks before it. As a section functioning in the most powerful imperialist nation, holding the most strategical position in the final struggle for the redivision of the earth, flushed with wealth and means which it will desperately use to keep in check the October Revolution, your convention must make your members and sympathizers understand this and prepare and once to overcome the contradiction between your political program and analysis and your tremendous organizational lag. Unless each member will sacrifice more, work harder and enable the organization to obtain contact with the masses, our international work will be greatly handicapped, as well as the positive steps toward the overthrow of American imperialism.

Trained cadres with elementary economic needs, who are capable of rising above their personal and petty daily needs is the only living link between the program, the party and the class. Without sacrificing any principles or theoretical work of the League, every effort must be made, every tactic must be tried, every possible avenue must be explored to **GAIN CONTACT WITH THE MASSES.** We realize that this is a struggle against the stream, that the war mongers are making this more difficult every day. But this is no reason for failure. At best it can only be an excuse. We hope the convention can devote the major time, on the basis of solid political agreement, to the problems and steps toward mass work.

Comradely,

COMMITTEE OF THE I. C. C.

# Luxemburg On The Russian Revolution

At long last the revisionists have found themselves a "spotless shelter from which they can continue hurling their vicious lies against Marxism. Under the copious skirts of Rosa Luxemburg such gentry as Lovestone, Integer, a whole host of ultra-lefts, and many others, have found the seclusion from which they can now attack Lenin with an aura of "authority".

History repeats itself and once again we find the completely reformist Lovestone organization in America (together with such socialists as Integer and some youthful "left" wingers) should be hiding under the same umbrella, with the ultra-left and Anarchistic "Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation of Glasgow", which also bases its opposition to Lenin on its "endorsement" of Rosa!

We have before us two pamphlets, one "Leninism or Marxism" a title imposed on two of Rosa's works by the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation, and a pamphlet just published a few months ago by the Lovestoneites titled "The Russian Revolution".

## POLITICAL DISHONESTY

The first pamphlet is one of the most glaring examples of crass dishonesty in politics we have ever seen. It publishes an old article by Luxemburg at the turn of the century arguing against Lenin's book "One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward". She argues not against the idea of centralism in the party but against the "greater or less degree of centralization and the detailed structure within a united and unified Party".

That such differences between Lenin and Luxemburg existed no one will deny but the Scottish Group which publishes this pamphlet omits to tell the reader that both were united against the ideas of autonomy and looseness of the Mensheviks and Narodniks, that both were against the loose structure of the Anarchists, that both fought side by side for years and years on the same fundamental program within the Congresses of the 2nd International.

The second part of the pamphlet takes a 3½ page excerpts from the 50 page pamphlet which is now published by the Lovestoneites and attempts to show by this that Luxemburg

was against the "Lenin-Stalin" idea of the Dictatorship of the Party as against the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. It attempts to lift a TACTICAL dispute, so labeled by Rosa, into a fundamental antagonism between Luxemburg and Lenin. It omits completely the complete and unequivocal endorsement of the fundamentals of the Bolshevik revolution.

The very title is a bit of unparalleled hypocrisy: "Leninism OR Marxism". Here is what Rosa Luxemburg in the same pamphlet (the part unpublished by these gentlemen) had to say about "Leninism":

## PRAISES LENIN

"Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary farsightedness and consistency in an historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honor and capacity which western Social-Democracy lacked was represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October Uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honor of international socialism".

Does this sound like Rosa was against "Leninism", as these lying critics impugn!

The pamphlet published by Lovestone, with an introduction by Bertram Wolfe, is a much more polished affair. Having completely abandoned even the phrases of Marxism — let alone its content — the Lovestone reformists and those who support them everywhere try with the aid of Rosa's work to prove that she was against Lenin's idea of "dictatorship" and that instead she was for "the extension of democracy".

Wolfe and Lovestone, formerly leaders of Comintern sections, now shout that "it was this crazy idea (that everything done by the Bolsheviks was the pinnacle of perfection) which formed the foundation of the Communist International from the outset and ultimately caused its destruction".

In other words, from its first moment the C. I. was above criticism, it was already the embryo of Stalinism. What a miserable lie, what shameful distortion!

As everyone living through the period of 1917-23 knows, the C. I. in that period was just a seething cauldron of ideological disputes and factions — over the questions of the signing of a peace treaty (in which Lenin was the smaller of two minorities), over the trade union question, over the NEP, over War Communism, over the nationalities question, over the question of the invasion of Poland, the Hungarian Revolution, "infantile leftism", and dozens of others. Literally millions of pieces of opposition literature was published throughout the world. There existed the various dozens of right wing groups both in Russia and abroad: the Trotsky faction during the period of War Communism, the Workers Truth group, the Worker Opposition, the Bordighists, the various opportunists in Sweden, Italy, the ultra-lefts in Germany, and many many others.

## WOLFE FOR CAPITALISM

Now let us see, what does Wolfe think is the outstanding contribution of Luxemburg: "To her the chief health-giving for proletarian revolution... is the extension of democracy". (our emphasis)

Here is the sum and substance of the thing. The Lovestoneites, as well as the rest of the revisionists, have recently gone over to the support of BOURGEOIS Democracy against "Totalitarianism", against both the Fascist countries and the Soviet Union. They are, if you please (à la Lewis Corey) for the extension of bourgeois democracy gradually and peacefully into a "democratic socialism". They are, in other words, for pure and simple REFORMISM; and their new line is merely a 1940 refinement of Kautsky's doctrine "democracy versus dictatorship".

But all of this is precisely the opposite of Rosa Luxemburg's theme, in direct and flagrant opposition to her life's work. On page 15 of the pamphlet "The Russian Revolution", she states: "Moreover the Bolsheviks immediately set as their aim of this seizure of power a complete far reaching revolutionary program: NOT THE SAFEGUARDING OF BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY, BUT A DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT FOR THE PURPOSE OF REALIZING SOCIALISM. Thereby they won for themselves the IMPERISHABLE HISTORIC DISTINCTION of having for the first time proclaimed the final aim of socialism as

the direct program of practical politics". (our emphasis).

Does this sound as if Rosa was for the EXTENSION of bourgeois democracy, or for its destruction? Does this sound as if she were against dictatorship or for it WHEN IT HAD A PROLETARIAN CONTENT?

## ENDORSES ALL BOLSHEVIK PRINCIPLES

What then is the main theme of Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet?

Here it is in her own words at the conclusion of the pamphlet. After giving her criticisms of TACTICAL and STRATEGICAL matters she says:

"Doubtless the Bolsheviks would have proceeded in this very way were it not that they suffered under the frightful compulsion of the world war, the German occupation and all the abnormal difficulties connected therewith, things which were inevitably bound to distort any socialist policy, however it might be imbued with the best intentions and the finest principles...

"Everything that happens in Russia is comprehensible and represents an inevitable chain of causes and effects, the starting point and end term of which are: the failure of the German proletariat and the occupation of Russia by German imperialism. IT WOULD BE DEMANDING SOMETHING SUPERHUMAN FROM LENIN AND HIS COMRADES IF WE SHOULD EXPECT OF THEM THAT UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES THEY SHOULD CONJURE FORTH THE FINEST DEMOCRACY, THE MOST EXEMPLARY DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, and a flourishing socialist economy. By their determined revolutionary stand, their exemplary strength in action, and their unbreakable loyalty to international socialism, THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED WHATSOEVER COULD POSSIBLY BE CONTRIBUTED UNDER SUCH DEVILISHLY HARD CONDITIONS".

The Bolsheviks have shown that they are capable of everything that a genuine revolutionary party can contribute within the limits of historical possibilities...

"This is the essential and enduring in Bolshevik policy... and in this sense the future everywhere belongs to 'Bolshevism'". (capitals, our emphasis).

This then is the framework for Rosa's criticism of the Bolsheviks: in **FUNDAMENTALS** she agrees 100% and unequivocally; on certain tactical and strategical question she registers her differences.

### TACTICAL DIFFERENCES

What are those differences?

1—She thinks the division of the land amongst the peasants "has created a new powerful layer of popular enemies of socialism on the countryside", is in the opposite direction and way from socialism. On this tactical question there can be no doubt that Lenin was correct. Even Wolfe has to admit this. The Hungarian revolution, which followed after Rosa's murder proved that the failure to make such a tactical concession can be the death knell of the revolution. Lenin's policy of "one step backward in order to make two steps forward" was thus confirmed.

2—She brings out against her old dispute on the question of the "right of self-determination" for oppressed nationalities. We have dealt with this elsewhere. On this too we believe Lenin was correct. Wolfe also has to agree that she was wrong on this point.

3—Constituent Assembly. She thinks the **method** of convoking the Constituent Assembly and then disbanding it was wrong. In her opinion "there was nothing left to do except to convoke an assembly that would issue forth out of the renewed Russia that had advanced further", to call in other words new election **AFTER** power had been seized.

4—She criticizes the Bolsheviks for granting the right to vote to only those who work, when the government is unable to give work to millions of workingmen. This is a "quite incomprehensible measure". Whether from her prison cell — where she wrote the pamphlet — she was able to judge what was going on in Russia on the question of suffrage correctly, it is hard to say. Undoubtedly war-wrecked Russia, even under the proletariat could not be perfect on this score. But that it was infinitely more democratic and universal than the suffrage anywhere else in history, of this there can be no doubt.

### POINTS OUT DANGERS AHEAD

5—She points out a possible danger to the dictatorship if there is not sufficient and constant education of the masses. "No one", she says, "knows this better, describes it more penetratingly; repeats it more stubbornly than Lenin. But he is completely mistaken in the means he employs. Decree, dictatorial force of the factory overseer, draconic penalties, rule by terror — all these things are but palliatives", 100% correct. But these palliatives were unfortunately absolutely essential during the first period. Along with it Lenin DID institute broad measures for the education of the mass in self-government. Every army unit had its political educator, every village had new educators. That these measures were far from adequate no one can dispute. But to have an adequate education of the mass it was first necessary, as Rosa herself points out, to spread the revolution to Germany.

6—She argues against what we consider to be a straw man, that Lenin and Trotsky "decide in favor of the dictatorship of a handful of persons". Without a general education of the broad masses the "dictatorship of a handful of person" is inevitable. The solution to this could only be **begun** by the Bolsheviks in their educational campaigns, in the various measures by Lenin closing the books of the Party to people who had not been workers for at least 5 years, etc. The real solution could only be the extension of the revolution to a highly industrialized country such as Germany. On this point we think Rosa was mistaken in her emphasis and her facts.

But taking all these things together, what do they amount to?

She herself constantly points out that "All of us are subject to the laws of history, and it is only **internationally** that the socialist order can be realized". She points to the danger of making a "virtue of necessity and want to freeze into a complete theoretical system all the tactics forced upon them by these fatal circumstances".

### AGREES WITH KERNEL

But, she concludes, "what is in order is to distinguish the essential from the non-essential, the **kernel** from the **accidental** excrescences in the policies of the Bolsheviks". (our emphasis). With the "kernel" she has no disagreement. "Accidental excrescences" she considered inevitable, although she felt she should point them out to avoid making a system out of these "accidents".

Yes, there were differences between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. History has proven Rosa wrong on the main arguments she had with Lenin (peasant question, right of self-determination, national question, etc.). There will al-

most always be important secondary differences between truly great revolutionaries. But ac against the revisionists of yesterday who attacked the **KERNEL** of the Bolshevik revolution, and those who are trying to attack it today — like Lovestone and the others — Rosa Luxemburg stood solidly and unequivocally on the side of Lenin and Marxism.

Let Bertram Wolfe and the Anti-Parliamentary Communist League take comfort from their distortions. They will no doubt continue to use Luxemburg as a hypocritical excuse for their revisionism. But the position of the immortal Rosa is quite clear — four square on the side of Lenin, the Bolsheviks and Marxism. August 7, 1940.



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