

# REVOLT

Vol. 2, No. 8

Published by Demos Press for the Central Committee of the  
Revolutionary Workers League, U. S., Box 141, Alfred Station,  
Detroit, Michigan

June 10, 1939

## French Reservists Revolt

Labor Fakers Cover Up Roosevelt

Calcutta Dockworkers Organized

## Briggs Strikers Hold Out For Union Shop

League to Hold Fourth Convention

*Pre-Convention Discussion*

Is Russia A Workers State?

Reply of the Central Committee

Anything Goes in I. W. W. Fight Against Seafarers Union



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5¢ per copy. \$1.00 per year (26 issues) - 50¢ per half year (13 issues)

# BRIGGS WORKERS HOLD OUT FOR UNION SHOP

## VICTORY CAN STOP EMPLOYERS' OFFENSIVE

Detroit, June 2. -Efforts of Federal Conciliator Dewey to mediate the strike of the fifteen thousand Briggs Body company strikers, which has paralyzed production in the Chrysler plants, parts plants, the Lincoln division of the Ford Company; tied up boats on the Lakes; and caused layoffs in drive-away, mounting and trucking companies, has resulted in a number of concessions for the workers through the satisfaction of fifteen of the original twenty eight grievances which precipitated the strike.

The question of the union shop which Briggs Local #212, UAW-CIO, has put up is still being mediated. The union says it will not go back to work unless this demand is granted. The company says it will not negotiate a new contract until this demand is waived.

The issue is a vital one for all concerned. If the company wins the employers will feel free to continue their union-splitting tactics and their general campaign of taking away the gains of the 1937 strike wave. If the union wins it will be a step toward winning a stronger hold in the industry. For Homer Martin it will mean a defeat as it would be a step toward shutting him out of the heart of the industry. For the class collaborationist leadership of the UAW-CIO it would mean a stronger hold over the workers.

Judging from the action of the Federal government in the mine strike where the union shop demand was also the central issue, Dewey is likely to bring pressure to grant the demand. The administration is anxious to see its supporters and agents in the trade union movement - John L. Lewis and the Stalinists - get a base strong enough to hold the workers in line for its policies, particularly its war preparations, in which coal and auto are vital.

The employers have realized the seriousness of the issue from the beginning. The company showed no desire to negotiate. But after Dewey entered the picture company officials sat down with Homer Martin to talk contract when Martin has no strength in Briggs.

What they really talked about came out later, when the strike-breaking machine really went into action. On Saturday, May 27, at the Briggs ball park mounted cops slugged auto strikers, and trampled women and children; 14 workers were arrested and Eschol Sherman is still held on a charge of felonious assault. On Sunday, May 28, strike-breakers, some of whom at least, are affiliated with Martin's outfit, attacked union pickets at the Briggs Highland Park plant. Monday, May 29, brother Joseph Ferris, Vice-President of Briggs Local #212, was shot in the hip and suffered a broken leg when the car in which he was chasing thugs who had just attacked the picket line with pistols and blackjacks, caught up with them. He was shot by Joseph Green of the Martin faction. The attack was made by fifty men in ten automobiles at both the Highland Park and Eight Mile Road plants. The police passed by the picket lines shortly before and many workers are wondering what possible stool-pigeon tipped the thugs off when to attack.

The papers report the arrest of three men from Evansville, Indiana armed with blackjacks who said they came up here "to help Homer Martin settle this strike."

Homer Martin was called in by Briggs because the union, emboldened by the winning of the union shop clause by the miners, has made the same demand on Briggs. If the Briggs local should win this demand it would encourage other locals to do the same. Victory would establish the UAW-CIO set-up as the union in the industry.

The fact that the International Executive Board has authorized the Briggs strike has raised the question in many workers' minds as to whether the no-strike policy of the leadership is being changed. It should be borne in mind that the International Executive Board is controlled by John L. Lewis and the Stalinists, both agents of the New Deal and supporters of its war preparations program. If they have put their o.k. on this strike it is for quite different reasons than a change in policy.

The Chrysler corporation has been "disciplining" workers and firing stewards and committeemen. The men want protection against the company. The union has a contract with the Chrysler corporation which expired at the end of April but has been extended to the end of June, practically the end of the production season. It is not a good time to take up the question of renewal and to put up a fight. A straight out fight against Chrysler should have been made some time ago when the workers were hot. But all sentiment for a strike was washed out then by the leadership which called for strict observance of the no-strike provisions of the contract. The Briggs situation is, for the leadership, a flank method of putting pressure on Chrysler for extension of the contract or renewal and for concessions.

(continued on page 21)

## LEAGUE TO HOLD FOURTH CONVENTION

The Fourth Convention of the League will be held in Chicago July 1-4. The Convention Call was issued to the League membership April 15. The Convention agenda includes: The Development of the War Danger; The Position of the Soviet Union; The Economic Situation in the United States; The Movement for a New Revolutionary International; and other subjects.

Material for the pre-convention discussion has been issued to the League membership in Internal Bulletins. Some of the material has been published in REVOLT, as articles based on the reports made to the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee which was held in Detroit March 11-12.

Because of the widespread interest in the Russian question in the labor and revolutionary movements and because of the importance which it occupies in the discussions between the League and the Committee for Revolutionary Labor Action the position of both groups are published in this issue, in the following pages.

Other material will be published in the next issue.

The length of the material on the Russian question has made necessary the postponement to the next issue of material planned for publication in this issue.

# IS RUSSIA A WORKERS STATE?

## POSITION OF THE C.R.L.A. ON THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

Under date of May 22 comrade Spencer wrote: "Enclosed...you will find our document on the Russian question...This document...will be presented at the July convention of the R.W.L. if our joint work works out fruitfully, and if our minimum position on Russia is agreed upon and adopted. We understand that you (Stamm) will be in New York the early part of July (an obvious error; June is meant). We are saving the discussion of the Russian question for you..." The result of this discussion will be reported to the League membership.

\* \* \*

In the epoch of Imperialism, as capitalism decays, the economy gets away from the old Laissez-Faire - or Hands off Business policy - and more and more the government is forced to interfere into, and place many restrictions upon industry, agriculture, and commerce. Especially in the Fascist countries, Germany and Italy, where, because of Germany's losing the war and Italy's being given practically nothing at the Versailles treaty, the decay of capitalism has been hastened and accentuated; the government has been forced to apply innumerable regulations and strait jackets to the whole of these capitalist economies.

In democratic countries too this tendency is prevalent, and is becoming more so daily. In America the latest stride, of large dimensions, in this direction has been the New Deal with its many alphabetical codes, forcing upon the economy an inexorable regimentation. This tendency in the imperialist epoch, which occurs together with the increasing number of nationalizations by the capitalist state and the growth of Trusts and Monopolies is called State Capitalism. "In the decay period of capitalism, many of the fundamental aspects of an early capitalism become more and more extinct. Lenin makes it clear and simple:

Imperialism emerged as a development and direct continuation of the fundamental properties of capitalism in general. But capitalism became capitalist imperialism only at a definite, very high stage of its development, when certain of its fundamental properties had begun to change into their opposites, when features of a period of transition from capitalism to a higher socio-economic system had begun to take shape and reveal themselves all along the line. Economically fundamental in this process is the replacement of capitalist free competition by capitalist monopolies. Free competition is the fundamental property of capitalism and of commodity production generally. Monopoly is the direct opposite of free competition; but we have seen the latter transformed into monopoly before our very eyes, creating large scale production and squeezing out small scale production, replacing large-scale by larger-scale production, finally leading to such a concentration of production and capital that monopoly has been and is the result: cartels, syndicates and trusts, and, merging with them, the capital of a dozen or so banks manipulating thousands of millions. And at the same time the monopolies, which have sprung from free competition, do not eliminate it,

but exist alongside of it and over it, thereby giving rise to a number of very acute and bitter antagonisms, points of friction, and conflicts." (Imperialism - Lenin, P.80, emphasis are mine-W.S.)

We see plainly...how private monopolies and state monopolies are bound up together in the age of finance capital... (Ibid, p.66, emphasis are mine - W.S.).

In opposition to Trotsky, for Lenin State Capitalism is not something that does not exist, but is rather a superstructure on capitalist economy, an economic form toward which capitalist society tends to move in the imperialist epoch. Even Engels could foresee the mixing of the state into the affairs of business:

.....the period of industrial boom with its unlimited credit inflation and the crisis itself through the collapse of great capitalist establishments, urge forward towards that form of the socialization of huge masses of means of production which we find in the various kinds of joint-stock companies. Many of these means of production are from the outset so colossal that, like the railways, they exclude all other forms of capitalist exploitation. At a certain stage of development even this form no longer suffices; the official representative of capitalist society, the state, is constrained to take over their management. (Anti-Duhring - Engels, p. 312.)

During war time especially, the need for a rigid economy becomes a life and death question for capitalism. And in the imperialist epoch nations are continually at war with each other. In the fight for markets and the growth of capitalist contradictions the need for state interference into all spheres of life grow stronger and become vital for imperialist competition with other nations. At a recent meeting of the Chamber of Commerce in Washington, Colonel Burns, executive officer to Louis Johnson, assistant Secretary of War, said "that a study is being made by the Brookings Institute. It covers price control, 'with all that it entails'..... He listed salaries, wages, taxes, prices and profits among the things that might conceivably be regulated by central authority should this country become involved as a military participant in international conflict." (N.Y. Times, May 3, 1939, emphasis are mine.) This is not all. The government has an entire plan which covers almost all walks of life. This plan will be put to work as soon as war breaks out; after the war a large part of the plan will remain in operation. All of it will remain, however, if America is defeated in the next war or if the crisis of economy brings fascism or a military dictatorship. The latter variant of the whole plan remaining with us is more likely for America might have need for fascism, or a military dictatorship, even if she wins the war.

It is interesting to note that in countries like Germany and Italy these regulations exist and have been in existence for several years now. The more capitalism decays the more regulation it gets from the capitalist state, all for the benefit of the capitalist class as a whole of course. Individual capitalists would prefer a more liberal capitalism but, with its decay, the concentration and centralization of wealth and economy move on inevitably. Without exception, all the testifiers before the Temporary National Economic Conference have come to the conclusion not that the government should stick its nose out of business, but that as long as there has to be government interference let there be as little of it as possible. All these features of the decaying economy tend to

make society move in the direction of one large Trust. The technocracy of society expands but its sociology declines. If, as Trotsky holds, the expansion of the technocracy and the growth of production were impossible in a period of decline, then we would have to come to the conclusion that American capitalism was progressive up until 1928!! In regard to Russian economy generally and the Kulak problem in particular, Trotsky always repeats that in spite of Stalin his policy is in reality being instituted. Trotsky mistakes the general tendency toward "collectivism" and State capitalism for socialism. But he forgets that together with this general "collectivist" trend we saw the original Kulaks being dragged back from Siberia and given land as private property. Although judicial laws never tell the truth about society, still, it is important to note that the new Russia constitution establishes private property in agriculture legally. As Lenin said in relation to Russia: electrification alone does not mean Socialism.

However, although the tendency is toward one big Trust, this, i.e., one big Trust, under imperialism can never be accomplished. Although capitalist monopoly pushes out free competition, events have shown that it cannot do this completely; and it exists side by side with it. Hitler and Mussolini are both backed by high finance, in spite of this they are forced, in order to obtain some popular support from the petty bourgeoisie, to let the little business man alone. Although he too must operate within the confines of many restrictions.

Kautsky, misunderstanding this tendency toward monopolies and trusts in the imperialist epoch, thought that this process would complete (that is, grow into one large trust) itself entirely unimpeded; came to reformist conclusions. Speaking of "internationally consolidated finance capital" he envisioned that the entire capitalist world would become one big trust and thereby do away with wars and depressions. Failing to completely understand Engels' statement: "If we go over from stock companies to trusts, which dominate and monopolize certain branches of industry, this thereby stops not only private production, but also planlessness.", Kautsky came to the false conclusion that modern capitalism, i.e., imperialism, is able to plan plenty and for use. Imperialism is doing away with "planlessness" but under capitalism it can only plan for profit, scarcity, wars and depressions.

Bukharin too made theoretical errors along the same line. Unlike Kautsky his errors on the ability of the development of a single trust within a country was more implicit. Unlike Kautsky he denied that wars and depressions would be done away with. He believed that competition would still exist, but only between the single trusts of each nation. Lenin on the other hand maintained that the epoch of imperialism sharpens the contradictions between countries, and that within countries competition is eased although not completely abolished. Lenin in his introduction to Bukharin's Imperialism and World Economy sums the whole problem up very objectively: "There is no doubt that the development is going in the direction of a single world trust that will swallow up all enterprises and all states without exception. But the development in this direction is proceeding under such stress, with such a tempo, with such contradictions, conflicts, and convulsions - not only economic, but also political, national, etc., etc. - that before a single world trust will be reached, before the respective national finance capitals will have formed a world union of 'ultra-imperialism', imperialism will inevitably explode, capitalism will turn into its opposite." (emphasis my own - W.S.).

The Revolution Betrayed - What is the Soviet Union and where is it Going? This is the title Trotsky gives his longest, and latest treatise on Russia and her problems. Trotsky starts out by asking: What is the Soviet Union? And without cracking a smile he concludes by answering: "The question of the character of the Soviet Union not yet decided by history. (p.252). The character of a government, the very first question which every Marxist - or even revolutionist - must answer, is thus buried after a booklength "analysis" of the Russian question.

"An attempt has been made to conceal the enigma of the Soviet regime by calling it 'State Capitalism'. This term has the advantage that nobody knows what it means." Such a regime never existed...." (p.245, 246). Trotsky is here expressing an ignorance of the most basic writings on Marxism. "An attempt has been made..." An ignorant reader might be led to believe that the attempt to characterize Russian economy as State Capitalism was made by some third rate scholar. But alas!, comrade Trotsky, that attempt was first made by Lenin!

For Socialism is nothing but the next step forward from state capitalist monopoly. In other words, Socialism is nothing but state capitalist monopoly made to benefit the whole people; by this token it ceases to be capitalist monopoly. Toward the Seizure of Power, Lenin, p.211; emphasis in the original.

In Russia, state capitalism, in contra-distinction to state capitalism in other capitalist countries is almost entirely pure. Russia is one big trust. Present day Russian economy has been able to attain that structure because the proletariat in seizing power centralized all economy into one cooperative system. The difference being that in those days it was a workers state because the workers held political power. Now with the government being counter-revolutionary, the workers having no political power at all, Russia is no more a workers state. The state capitalist superstructure is utilized for profit (the 8% bonds, overseers, bureaucrats, specialists, and labor and collective farm autocrats) and not for use.

Society can only move in two directions either further toward capitalism or toward Socialism. No matter which road is taken the tendency toward state capitalism will see to it that economy will be on the way to more nationalization and state ownership. Under present day capitalism the powerful contradiction between socialized production and private appropriation can only be solved by the socialist revolution. But the social revolution, while abolishing private appropriation, will utilize and even improve the already existing socialized production. To argue therefore that Russia is a workers state because of state property and nationalization is entirely false. Only the holding of political power by the workers determine the existence of the workers state. Otherwise all the collectives of the anarchists during the Spanish revolution, and the nationalizations under Cardenas in Mexico, and the latest nationalizations in Bolivia would all mean workers governments and be socialism!

In Imperialism Lenin explains that even under capitalism, especially in the period of decay, do we have nationalizations and the socialization of production. But under the capitalist state this is only Socialization in form and not in content. During the time of the N.E.P. Lenin explained that in spite of the concessions to bourgeois tendencies, Russia was still a workers state, precisely because the workers had state or political power. Trotsky in those days, and in a speech at the 4th



Congress of the C.I., opposed Lenin's concept of state capitalism for Russian economy on the grounds that how can you speak of any kind of "capitalism" when the workers have political power. Now that the workers have lost political power (and Trotsky admits this) he argues that Russia is still a workers state because of the state property and nationalizations! That state power determines a workers state is emphasized by Lenin:

Everybody talks about imperialism. But imperialism is nothing but monopoly capitalism.

That in Russia, too, capitalism has become monopoly capitalism is eloquently confirmed by the coal trust, metal trust, sugar syndicate, etc. The same sugar syndicate shows clearly how monopoly capitalism develops into state monopoly capitalism.

And What is the State? It is the organization of the ruling class; in Germany, for instance, the Junkers and capitalists. That is why the measure called "war Socialism" by the German Plekhanovs (Scheideman, Lensch and others) is in reality war-time state monopoly capitalism. Or to speak more plainly and clearly, it is military penal labour for the workers, military defence of the capitalists' profits.

But try and substitute for the Junker-capitalist, for the landowner capitalist state, a revolutionary democratic state, (read: workers state or dictatorship of the proletariat - W.S.) i.e., such as would destroy all privileges in a revolutionary way without being afraid of introducing in a revolutionary way the fullest possible democracy - and you shall see that, in a truly revolutionary-democratic state, state monopoly capitalism inevitably and unavoidably means progress towards Socialism. (Towards the Seizure of Power, Book I, p.210-211, Lenin. Emphasis in original.)

The mere fact that during the period of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat there is neither Socialist economy nor capitalist economy, shows conclusively that the wielding of state power determines the workers state. Socialization of production, nationalizations and state regulation under capitalism cannot solve the contradictions of society under a bourgeois state. Only a workers state can utilize nationalizations and state property for the benefit of the people and thereby solve the contradictions and problems of present day society. "By more and more driving toward the conversion of the vast socialized means of production into state property, it itself points the way for the carrying through of this revolution. The proletariat seizes State Power, and transforms the means of production in the first instance into State property." (Engels, Anti-Duhring, p.314; emphasis in the original).

One moment, it will be argued, if Russia is not a workers state and its economy and superstructure is State Capitalist, where then are the individual capitalists. First of all it must be remembered that while the ranks of the workers is increasing the numbers of the capitalist class is decreasing, that is, generally speaking of our modern capitalist system and its superstructure. For instance, although private property has officially been established in Russian agriculture, still no one can point out an individual landowner or capitalist on the land!... the conversion of the great organizations for production and communication into joint-stock companies and state property shows that for this purpose the bourgeoisie can be dispensed with." (Ibid, p.312).

In the thesis on the Russian Question adopted at the October 1937 Plenum of the R.W.L., which was drawn up by Cowl, Basky and Stamm, under the heading of what constituted the "1917-1918 Social revolution", the vital eight points listed are non-existent today!!

"Bourgeois state overthrown"- Today the Russian state apparatus is just as anti-working class as the old "bourgeois state" which was overthrown. The betrayal of the former Russian workers state by the Stalinists, and their bringing about of the present reactionary state capitalist economy was able to be accomplished only after the greatest torture and repressive measures invoked by the Stalinists against the revolutionists and workers. (overcrowded Siberian jails, the "Moscow trials" episode, etc).

"New state Soviets established; proletarian democracy" - Today we find the Soviet abolished by the new Russian constitution officially, but in reality they were done away with long ago. Proletarian democracy is non-existent. In the coming new Russian revolution the workers will not only have to seize state power but they will also have to reconstitute the Soviets, kick out the privileged and smash the Stalinist state machinery.

"Industry, banks, transport nationalized - state property" - But we have nationalization and state property under present day capitalism-too. It was always the workers democracy and their control of production together with the political power the workers had that decided that the nationalization and state property benefit the workers and this made Russia a workers state. It is claimed that the inheritance of wealth in Russia is not "complete". This is a false view. Even in countries like America and Germany state taxes keep inheritance from being "complete".

"Workers control of production instituted" - Today we find the workers controlling neither production or anything else!

"Workers Militia created" - Today whatever remains of the militias, and the "Red" Army is used to keep the workers, especially the revolutionary workers, in subjection. Strikes are ruthlessly broken!

"Land given to peasants - state property only judicially. Monopoly of foreign trade established." - Today private property is established in agriculture not "only" judicially but in reality too. Whereby the monopoly of foreign trade formally aided the workers state it now aids the new ruling class.

"Bolshevik Party controlled state apparatus" - Today an anti-bolshevik counter-revolutionary party controls all apparatus.

"Foreign policy shaped to promote world revolution. Bureaucratic capitalist oppression of National minorities overthrown and the right of self-determination of Nations established." - Today the foreign policy of Russia is shaped to drown the world revolution in workers blood! The present Russian state opposes national minorities, is opposed to self-determination of nations and supports imperialist nations in enslaving colonial peoples.

"By 1924," reads this same thesis, "the pressure of the bourgeois aspects of Soviet life strengthened by the defeats of the world proletariat and the revival of economy, and the pressure of the world bourgeoisie, reached serious proportions." (emphasis my own-W.S.) This in 1924!! Who can say now, 15 years later, that Russia is still a workers state!!

WILLIAM SPENCER

OUR MINIMUM POSITION FOR RUSSIA

First let us explain what we mean by a minimum position. We don't say that anyone who doesn't hold our full Russian position is thereby incapable of carrying out the class struggle in Marxian fashion in America. As we have already stated in our communication of May 7th, the Russian question would be a split question only if our individual analysis would lead us to entirely different programs of action for America. History has taught us that theoretical disagreements don't necessarily mean practical disagreements. Lenin had a false theoretical position on the theory of the Permanent Revolution, which was vital for Russia, but in spite of this his practical class struggle line was correct. Luxemburg disagreed with Lenin on the question of defeatism but in practice she was able to carry out a correct line. Also her false positions did not necessarily flow from her theoretical disagreements. Only if Marxists were formal logicians would it necessarily follow that false theoretical positions mean false practical lines.

The minimum position is the criterion which establishes whether our practical line is identical and correct. In our minimum position for Russia we are opposed to send material aid to Stalinism; and in the coming war we will support all revolutionary strikes of seamen on ships sending arms and other materials to Russia. We are opposed to the issuance of the slogan of Defend the Soviet Union.

In discussing the Russian question in mass publications more should be said about direct and practical problems, rather than have the articles revolve around whether Russia is or is not a workers state because of this or in spite of that, etc. The calling for Workers Democracy in Russia; For the Reconstitution of the Russian Soviets and For the Building of a Marxist Party in Russia, would be better points of agitation than all the so-called high theoretical boloney put together.

We believe that even from the point of view of the present position of the R.W.L., the comrades should be opposed to the sending of material aid to Stalinist Russia. For if Stalin will "work for the defeat of Soviet Russia" then why send him material aid? Most certainly if during the course of the next war revolutionary forces show themselves in Russia then we must send them whatever aid we can whether they are in agreement with our whole line or not. But to be in favor of sending aid to Russia even in the absence of these forces is to betray. Oehler holds that if aid cannot be sent to revolutionary forces in Russia then it should be sent anyway. We must reject this sending of aid to the counter-revolutionary butcher of the cream of the revolutionary working class.

The slogan Defend the Soviet Union is not at all concrete or practical and the issuance of it now or during the next world blood-bath will be entirely meaningless. Our slogans should be more concrete and deal more with the simple grievances of the Russian workers against Stalinism. The likelihood of a Russo-German alliance to eventuate is an immediate probability. Its accomplishment will mean a great antipathy among the workers not only against Stalinism but also against Socialism unless the proper, simple and concrete slogans are raised.

This is our minimum position and so we cannot here present a full line, but the line of propaganda on Russia for America will have to be consistent with the points listed above.

WILLIAM SPENCER.

## REPLY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The comrades of the C.R.L.A. raise for discussion the most fundamental aspect of the Russian question - the class character of the social system in the territory of the Soviet Union. They are not alone in examining the problems created by the degeneration of the first proletarian dictatorship in history. Many groups of revolutionary workers all over the world have raised this question.

Since the first part of 1935 when a number of us were organizing the Left Wing in the Workers Party we have confronted this question as a group. At that time Shachtman\* was flirting with the idea that power could pass into the hands of a victorious capitalist class in Russia by peaceful means. On that occasion we formulated a position which dealt with the questions raised by the C.R.L.A. today.

When the League was established early in 1936 it took over the position of the Left Wing of the Workers Party. This position has been almost constantly under discussion in the League as the panorama of degeneration in the Soviet Union unfolded.

The discussion revealed, from time to time, that changes were necessary in this or that aspect of our position. In this way we changed our estimation of Stalinism from centrism to a new historic form of social reformism. In this way, too, we came to understand the significance of the struggle in Russia and in the Communist Party after Lenin's death, and the changes in class relations which it brought about in 1927 and 28, when Stalinism triumphed over the Trotsky opposition. In short, our position developed as events unfolded and as our study and discussion of the problem increased our understanding.

### BASKY, COWL AND STAMM POSITION

This development culminated in the position worked out by Basky, Cowl and Stamm which was adopted at the October, 1937 plenum of the Central Committee and endorsed by the Second Convention two months later. It was published in the November, 1937 Fourth International. Looking back over the past four years we can say that we have adhered consistently to the fundamental position worked out in 1935. The changes were of a secondary character.

The position of the C.R.L.A. document challenges our position. It counterposes another position to it. After examining the C.R.L.A. document carefully we do not find either data or argument in it to convince us to change our position and adopt its position.

On the contrary, we think that the position of the C.R.L.A. document is false. These are our reasons:

The C.R.L.A. document poses and answers the question: Is Russia a Workers State? Its thesis, briefly put, is: Russia is a capitalist society in the form of state capitalism; "Russia is one big trust;" "The state capitalist superstructure is utilized for profit...and not for use." There is a "new ruling class."

\*The present editor of the Trotskyist Socialist Appeal.

The arguments made in support of this thesis involve two important questions of Marxist theory. These are:

- 1- The method of determining the class character of society;
- 2- The relation of the state to the mode of production, of the legal superstructure to the property relations.

On these questions the C.R.L.A. document has a false position. Ignoring earlier social systems and limiting ourselves to capitalism and the society of transition from capitalism to communism, the position stands thus:

The most fundamental, distinguishing characteristic of capitalist society is the contradiction between socialized production and capitalist appropriation; between the social character of the productive process and the private character of the appropriation of the products of that process. The revolution which capitalism effected was the socialization of the means of production. Where, previously, production had been carried on by individuals who, for the most part, owned the means of production, the bourgeoisie, beginning in the fifteenth century, concentrated these means of production, enlarged them and gave them a social character, through effecting a social division of labor. Appropriation, however, was not revolutionized. The method by which the individual producer retained the product of his toil and brought it to market was retained by the bourgeoisie as the method of appropriation of the historically new method of production. It is this contradiction which constitutes the capitalist mode of production.

#### SOCIAL ANTAGONISMS OF CAPITALISM

Out of this contradiction arises the whole of the social antagonisms of capitalist society. It is the material, economic base for the social antagonism of the proletariat versus the bourgeoisie. It is likewise the basis for the simultaneous tendency of capitalism to develop the means of production into a single national and world trust and its inability to eliminate competition within the state boundaries which it has created and is forever changing and destroying, and between states.

The proletarian revolution consists in this: that it frees the productive process from the contradiction which capitalism has introduced into it; it abolishes capitalist appropriation and substitutes appropriation by all of the product which all co-operate to produce. Freed of the impediment of capitalist appropriation socialized production can reach new heights of concentration, division of labor, and mechanization, while society as a whole appropriates its products for the total social welfare.

But since this revolution cannot be effected at one blow a period of transition is necessary. The proletariat, in the revolution, expropriates the capitalist class and makes the means of production state property. In expropriating the capitalist class the proletariat overthrows the capitalist mode of production. To do this it must overthrow the bourgeois state and erect a proletarian state in its place.

In making the means of production state property the proletariat is, so to speak, completing the revolution in production which the bourgeoisie began five centuries ago but which it cannot complete. But in overthrowing private ownership and creating state property the proletariat creates

new property relations. Because of its inability to instantly eliminate economic inequality and establish communist economy, transitional society bears a contradictory character. On the one hand it retains capitalist relations; on the other it contains the new, communist elements.

On October 30, 1919, Lenin wrote an article called "Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," in which he explained the character of the transition society.

"Theoretically, there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period. The latter cannot but combine the features and properties of both these systems of social enterprise. This transition period cannot but be a period of struggle between moribund capitalism and nascent communism - in other words, between capitalism which has been defeated but not yet destroyed and communism which has been born but which is still very feeble....

"In Russia, owing to the distinct backwardness and petty bourgeois character of our country, the dictatorship of the proletariat is bound to be distinguished by certain peculiarities as compared with advanced countries. But the basic forces - and the basic forms of social production - are the same in Russia as in any capitalist country, so that these peculiarities cannot affect the main thing.

"These basic forms of social production are capitalism, petty commodity production and communism. The basic forces are the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (particularly the peasantry) and the proletariat.

"The economic system of Russia in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat represents a struggle of the first steps of labor communistically united - within the bounds of a single vast state - against petty commodity production and capitalism, which has been preserved and is also reviving on the basis of petty commodity production." (War Communism, pages 3 and 4).

#### COMMUNISM OR CAPITALISM

To this it is necessary to add only that the struggle of which Lenin speaks, WHICH IS STILL GOING ON IN RUSSIA, can be resolved in only one of two ways: either in a historically progressive way, through world revolution to a communist society; or in a reactionary way, through the restoration of the capitalist system.

In 1917-18 the capitalist state and capitalist property relations, the capitalist mode of production were overthrown in Russia. A proletarian dictatorship was established. State property was established in the means of production; social appropriation was instituted. But because the socialized means of production were unable to satisfy the needs of the population, bourgeois inequality in the distribution of objects of consumption was retained. The dictatorship of the proletariat rested on the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and peasantry in which the proletariat predominated. The foreign policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet state was: world revolution.

The course of development since 1917-18 has been uneven, marked by advances and retreats. For the sake of convenience we may say that during the years when Lenin was at the helm of the state the general direction was toward a historically progressive resolution of the contradictions of soviet life. But about the time of his death in January, 1924 the

capitalist elements in soviet life increased significantly in weight. The main causes were the defeats of the revolution in Europe and the resulting increase in the strength of world capitalism. In the following four years a furious struggle took place between the anti-proletarian and proletarian forces in the country and in the Communist Party which resulted, in 1927-28, in the political subordination of the proletariat. Thus a condition for the definitive retrogression of soviet society toward capitalism was realized. In the following years this retrogression advanced at a rapid tempo as control over the state and economy by the proletariat was eliminated step by step and as the foreign policy of the state became increasingly and openly hostile to revolutionary action by the world working class, the colonial masses and oppressed nationalities.

Had Soviet society been able to advance toward communism the inequality in the sphere of consumption would have been gradually eliminated as it became possible to meet the material and cultural needs of the entire population. But the retrogression has both signified and consisted in an aggravation of this inequality with the result that there arose a multi-numerous and powerful stratum of persons from the ranks of the workers and peasants whose privileged position constituted the material basis for the development of social interests separate from and antagonistic to the interests of the mass of workers and peasants. Since they came in time to control the state and economy they used their control to protect and advance their interests and elevate their standard of living.

#### THE FIRST FIVE YEAR PLAN

The enormous expansion of industry under the first five year plan created an ideal condition for this purpose. At the same time its growth to vast proportions - approximately ten to fifteen per cent of the population - made inevitable a stratification in the bureaucracy itself. The lower layers stand closer to the proletarian and toiling masses; the topmost layers, being furthest removed and closest to capitalism, are the spearhead of the entire retrogression. The class struggle in the country finds its echoes in the factional struggles, intrigues, frame-up trials and murders in the bureaucracy. In its rise and ascension the bureaucracy converted the Communist Party from an instrument of revolution into an instrument for fighting revolution, for the retrogression to the restoration of the capitalist system.

The retrogression of Soviet society has advanced so far that already many of the primary achievements of the October revolution have been liquidated. But the property relations, the mode of production established by the October revolution has not been liquidated. However breached they still stand. While they stand there is no capitalist class in Russia. The topmost layer of the bureaucracy may be described as a bourgeois stratum, but until its base in production is private ownership of the means of production, it is not and cannot be a capitalist class.

The foregoing is not the position, nor the approach of the C.R.L.A. document. The position advanced therein is that the October revolution was nothing more than a seizure of political power. Insofar as the property relations of the country were concerned, the mode of production, these were never changed at all. If this is not clear in the text of the document it is made clear by comrade Spencer in a letter he wrote at the request of the Central Committee which wanted to determine exactly what

was meant by the C.R.L.A. document. Comrade Spencer wrote: "The property relations and the mode of production are capitalist. And they've never been anything but. The Russian Revolution did not do away with capitalist property relations."

The fact is that capitalist property rights were overthrown and with them the capitalist mode of production. The original Constitution, adopted by the Third All-Russian Congress of Soviets, declared in January, 1918: "Chapter Two, 3. (a) For the purpose of attaining the socialization of land, all private property in land is abolished and the entire land is declared to be national property....(b) All forests, treasures of the earth and waters of general public utility, all equipment, whether animate or inanimate, model farms and agricultural enterprises, are declared to be national property...(e) The transfer of all banks to the ownership of the Workers and Peasants Government, as one of the conditions of the liberation of the toiling masses from the yoke of capital, is confirmed. (f) Universal obligation to work is introduced for the purpose of eliminating the parasitic strata of society and organizing the economic life of the country." And so on. In the article already quoted Lenin wrote: "In Russia, labor is united communistically for the reason that firstly, private ownership in the means of production has been abolished, and secondly, the proletarian state power is organizing large-scale production on state-owned land and in state-owned enterprises on a national scale...." These facts can be established by an endless number of documents, records and speeches.

#### PRIVATE APPROPRIATION?

Let us consider the consequences of denying historically established facts. Can it be said that in Russia the mode of production is characterized by private appropriation? That private appropriation exists, together with social appropriation is undoubtedly true. But is it the dominant form? Obviously not. Is it possible to establish the existence of private ownership of the means of production along with state property? Yes. But is private ownership dominant? Obviously not. Can the important owners, the private appropriators be named? Can the means of production which are owned by private appropriators be named, plant by plant, trust by trust, bank by bank? Can their relation to and connection with the leading imperialist banks, trusts, and combines in capitalist countries outside of Russia be established? Obviously not. How then if the fundamental, distinguishing characteristics of capitalist society do not predominate, can it be said that Russia is a capitalist society? For Marxists this question of property relations, of the mode of production is decisive for determining the class character of a society.

In an effort to get around this decisive point the document of the C.R.L.A. manifests an inability to grasp the contradictory character of soviet society.

To establish the capitalist character of Russia the C.R.L.A. document points to the existence of 8% bonds and to the fact that the "new Russian constitution establishes private property in agriculture legally." The point is not whether capitalism exists or has continued to exist in Russia. Recall what Lenin said on this score!

Let us take first the question of surplus value. The authors of the C.R.L.A. document could have made an even stronger case. The soviet



state has exported capital to Turkey in the form of loans for industrial construction upon which it receives interest, interest from the exploitation of the Turkish workers. Under Lenin, as later under Stalin, until its sale to Japan in the early thirties, the Soviet state was the recipient of interest from its part-ownership in the Chinese Eastern Railway, from the exploitation of the Manchurian workers. Again, as long as a proletarian dictatorship will exist surrounded by a world society which is capitalist, every commodity exported by it for sale on the capitalist world market enables world capitalism to realize surplus value from the toil of the Russian workers.

Surplus value has been created daily in the Soviet Union since it was founded. The question is not at all whether surplus value exists, but the mode of appropriating it. Is it private or social? Because transition society is transitional the answer must be: BOTH. The question is, therefore, WHICH IS DOMINANT? We say that despite everything appropriation is still social in form. The C.R.L.A. ignores this question in its document. Its method of reasoning is mechanical. According to it Russia is all one thing or the other. It is not at all a question of the RELATION of CONTRADICTIONARY ANTAGONISTIC PARTS.

It is the same thing with the question of private property in the land. True, the new constitution recognizes ownership of the land by collectives in perpetuity. But it is only a partial restoration of private property relations. The C.R.L.A. document recognizes this when it admits that there are no capitalist landowners. But it stops short of a full analysis. Why are there no private owners? Because private ownership in the land is still only juridical. The legal owners do not have the right which landowners in America or France have: to dispose of what they own by sale or legacy.

#### C.R.L.A. Contradictions

The existence of the bureaucracy and its appropriation of an ever larger share of the surplus value of the country does not in itself alter the property relations. It constitutes an instrument for their destruction but until private ownership is established in corporative or in individual form as the dominant property relationship neither the bureaucracy nor any part of it can be said to be a capitalist class.

The failure of the C.R.L.A. document to grasp the contradictory character of soviet society leads it into a number of gross contradictions. Viz:

It contends that Russia is a capitalist society. It speaks of a "new ruling class." But it admits inability to locate the capitalist class. Confronted by this astonishing phenomenon the C.R.L.A. document suggests a number of explanations. The capitalist class is diminishing. This may or may not be so. We will not argue the point. Let us even grant it. It does not follow that it cannot be located at all.

To defend its position the C.R.L.A. document would have to conclude that its inability to locate the capitalist class is the outcome of the tendency of the capitalist class to diminish.

The quotation from Engels is in line with this implication, "...the conversion of the great organizations for production and communication into joint-stock companies and state property shows that for this purpose the bourgeoisie can be dispensed with."

The quotation is arbitrary. In fact it is torn out of context. Engels was not trying to prove that the bourgeoisie is diminishing or that it cannot be located. He had an entirely different idea in mind. Engels was concerned, in the passage from which the quotation is made, with showing that the bourgeoisie performs no socially useful function. Here is what he said: "If the crises demonstrate the incapacity of the bourgeoisie for managing any longer modern productive forces, the transformation of the great establishments for production and distribution into joint-stock companies, trusts and state property, show how unnecessary the bourgeoisie are for that purpose. All the social functions of the capitalist are now performed by salaried employees. The capitalist has no further social function than that of pocketing dividends, tearing off coupons and gambling on the Stock Exchange where the different capitalists despoil one another of their capital."

Since the authority of Engels has been invoked we must ask those who have done so to demonstrate who is clipping what coupons in Russia in the sense in which Engels wrote; what the coupons represent in industry, transport, finance; who is despoiling whom of what capital; and where the Stock Exchange is.

It is no better with the theory of state capitalism. State capitalism is defined in the C.R.L.A. document as the acquisition of means of production by the state and the intervention of the capitalist state in economy. Let us not argue whether there is such a thing as state capitalism. We can leave that for another occasion and confine the discussion to the tendency which the C.R.L.A. describes by that name.

#### STATE MONOPOLY

It is correctly pointed out that the tendency in capitalist society is toward the development of monopoly trusts into state monopoly. Individual capitalists are expropriated by the state or bought out. The implication is that in Russia this process has advanced to the point at which it is practically complete. Hence: "Russia is one big trust." In that country all economy has been centralized "into one co-operative system." In short, it is contended, in effect, that the difference between, let us say, the United States and Russia is not the difference between two social systems but only a difference of degree in the development of two capitalist countries. The point which the C.R.L.A. document appears to overlook is that before this process could pass from the stage reached by the most advanced capitalist countries to the stage achieved in Russia a revolution had to take place in property relations. The capitalist mode of production had to be overthrown.

Why was this so? Because, as the C.R.L.A. document convincingly shows, capitalism cannot eliminate competition. All the state property in the capitalist world does not and cannot eliminate the Stock Exchange.

But, in denying that capitalist property relations were overthrown by the revolution of 1917, and in stating that Russia is one big capitalist trust the C.R.L.A. document is in the unfortunate position of giving support to the idea that Russia, capitalist Russia as is contended, has achieved what is impossible under capitalism.

When we consider that Russia was an extremely backward country, that it was for precisely this reason that the economic system collapsed under

the gigantic stress of the war, that production fell to a very low level during the stormy years of the war and the revolution, and that at no time since then has productivity even begun to seriously challenge the productivity of countries like the United States, Germany and England, the idea that it has achieved the impossible task of eliminating competition within the framework of capitalism defies scientific comprehension. The attempt to get around the need of locating the capitalist class in (as is contended) capitalist Russia by suggesting that the capitalist class has diminished to the vanishing point leads to absurd conclusions. If this process has been completed, then we confront the startling paradox that Russia is a capitalist society without capitalists. Now, the capitalist class is one part of the social antagonism of which the proletariat is the other, which results, let us remember, from the antagonism of socialized production and capitalist appropriation. Only the proletariat can destroy the social antagonism by destroying the capitalist mode of production and establishing communism. But the idea of a capitalist society without a capitalist class involves the idea that in seizing power, the workers perfected the capitalist mode of production; and, thereby, destroyed the social antagonism.

If there can be a capitalist society without capitalists, there can be a proletarian dictatorship without the proletariat. And by the same token, there can be a class struggle without classes. Whoever is willing to embrace such conclusions is welcome to the premises from which they flow.

#### STATE AND MODE OF PRODUCTION

Again. The idea that a workers state was erected in Russia on the basis of a capitalist mode of production contradicts Marxian theory. The state in any historic epoch corresponds to the mode of production of which it is the superstructure and which it is its function to defend against the rebellion of the oppressed classes. The capitalist mode of production needs the capitalist state. "...the modern state..." said Engels, "is only the organization that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments, as well of the workers as of individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is...the ideal personification of the total national capital." No more can a proletarian dictatorship stand on a capitalist mode of production than the capitalist state could stand on the foundation of feudal property relations.

The theory of Marxism and the history of society protest the false position of the C.R.L.A. document.

But even after we have disposed of the false position of the C.R.L.A. document the question still remains: can Russia be said to be a workers state? Our answer must be that on the plane of property relations, of the mode of production, it is. But on the plane of the policy of the state and economic administration we must note that these are violently antagonistic to the property relations, the mode of production and have become instruments by which the latter are being destroyed.

Is this not a contradiction? It is. It is a contradiction of the retrogression of a transition society to capitalism in which the retrogression in the political sphere has outstripped the retrogression in the sphere of economy.

In the proletarian revolution the political power is seized in order to change the mode of production. The revolution in property relations in Russia was not accomplished at one stroke. The quotations already made from the original constitution shows clearly that the banks and land had been made state property. The socialization of industry took place at a later date. In short, the revolution advanced more quickly in the political than in the economic sphere.

What has happened is that this advance has been converted into its opposite. The revolution is not advancing; it is being liquidated. The retrogression in the political sphere has outstripped the retrogression in the economic sphere. Politics, from leading the way on the road to Communism, is leading the way on the road back to capitalism.

It is an inability to appreciate these relationships which lie at the root of the confusion of the C.R.L.A. document. It is almost certain that with further study and discussion the question can be satisfactorily cleared up.

#### ON C.R.L.A MINIMUM POSITION

With respect to the so-called minimum position of the C.R.L.A., we must state frankly that it is not a position at all. The most that we can make out of it are three slogans: For the Reconstitution of the Soviets; For Workers Democracy; and For A New Communist Party in the Soviet Union. We are, it goes without saying, for these slogans. The question of defending the Soviet Union is a matter of defending the workers against imperialist attack from without and against counter-revolutionary attacks within. We can agree that the slogan as it stands is meaningless. The defense of the remaining conquests of the October revolution at the time when they are subjected to mortal danger will necessitate the most intransigent struggle against the Stalinist regime. Victory will involve the overthrow of that regime. As for sending aid to Stalin, it would be treason to the revolution.

The question of strikes by American seamen against shipping arms to Russia is a question of policy for building the revolutionary party in the United States. If the class struggle can be developed here by seamen's strikes against sending aid to Stalin, then they should be encouraged. For, in the end, the American workers can serve their Russia brothers best by overthrowing American imperialism. But strikes against sending aid to the Russian workers to defend themselves against imperialist attack and Stalinist treachery would be reactionary, nationalistic, chauvinistic.

As we penetrate more deeply into the class struggle and acquire influence among the organized workers we will confront these problems in all their complexity. If we have a sound political conception of the general problems which the workers face, an attitude of learning what their specific problems are, and a keen tactical ability to link up the struggle for immediate demands with the larger aims of the revolution, we shall be able to solve the tactical questions as they arise. In that way we will establish sound foundations for the new Communist party.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

# ANYTHING GOES IN I.W.W. FIGHT AGAINST SEAFARERS UNION

## SLANDER USED AGAINST MILITANTS

To the Editor,  
Industrial Worker,  
 Chicago, Illinois.

June 2, 1939

The Industrial Worker of June 4th, page 4, which I have just received, charges me in an article under a Detroit date line entitled "Rebel Editor Takes Fink Book" with carrying a Copeland fink book.

In addition it says that I am editor of REVOLT published by the Revolutionary Workers League. It describes me as a coal-passer on the SS Fitch of the D&C Steamship line. The only thing omitted was my address and social security number. The Industrial Worker gives me "seven days from publication to drop the book or drop out of the sea-going industry on the Lakes." These are the facts:

I do not carry the Copeland book. I carry the seaman's certificate of identification. I am not the editor of REVOLT. I am a member of the Seafarers' International Union of North America in good standing. By conservative estimate over 75% of the union membership on the Lakes carry the Copeland books. The policy of the union is to ditch the fink book after the first trip. I got the certificate when the ship tied up in May.

I think the policy of the union should be more aggressive. It should take up and fight the fink book issue like the S.U.P. did on the West Coast. This is one of the issues around which the S.I.U. can be built into a powerful union on the Lakes.

All of these facts are known to the I.W.W. in Detroit. I have discussed this many times with **your** members here.

Now the article appeared in the Industrial Worker when the author was in full possession of all the facts. This can only mean one thing: that the I.W.W. policy is not to build the S.I.U.; that it is using the weak policy of the union on the fink book issue as part of a general strategy of factually undermining it and building its own private Marine Transport Workers Union, #510.

Apparently, as far as the I.W.W. is concerned, anything goes in this fight. Many of the statements appearing in the Industrial Worker about various individuals in the S.I.U. and S.U.P. have been exposed as tissues of lies and half-truths. The present finky attack on me can be used by the D&C line to fire me off the job. It can be used by certain forces in the union should they be so inclined, for red-baiting purposes.

Early in May I was approached by "fellow-worker" Crotchet, Verlaine or whatever moniker it is the Detroit secretary of the I.W.W. goes by, to join I.U. #510 of the I.W.W., saying I was a sap for paying the regular \$10 initiation fee into the S.I.U. when I could get transferred into the union from the M.T.W. for a buck. (The S.I.U. honors for transfer all bona-fide maritime union cards, including the M.T.W.)

Had I accepted I am sure this attack on me would never have been published. But I refused because I believe that this transfer privilege should not be abused or used for factional purposes. Whether or not other workers have fallen for this proposition I do not know.

The I.W.W. talks a lot about fighting the fink book. The fink book cannot be fought without a strong union. Busting up the S.I.U. is not going to beat the fink book. If the I.W.W. really means business let its members in Detroit stop hanging around the S.I.U. hall trying to recruit members into the M.T.W.; let them get into the S.I.U. and build it as the union in the industry. Let all those who really want to fight the fink book get together and help sharpen the policy of the union.

In the spirit of labor solidarity, I ask you to publish this reply.

Fraternally,

Carl Cowl  
S.I.U. Deck #985

## BRIGGS STRIKERS

(continued from page 3)

The trouble with this tactic is that it has not been explained to the workers. Workers not directly connected with the strike are affected by it. A big campaign is on by the capitalists to persuade these workers that the Briggs workers are responsible for the shut down. Unless the union counteracts this propaganda and involves the workers by putting up demands in their interests, many workers can be turned into anti-union men and even strike-breakers. Failure of the leadership to do this shows it has not changed its class collaborationist policy and is using the situation for its own ends.

The big lessons of this strike, even now, before it is over, are: the attacks of the employers can be stopped only by strike action; the union needs a fighting policy and a new leadership.

AUTO WORKER

### SENIORITY - IF YOU COME BACK

A new clause looking to possibility of war is contained in the contract signed today by the Detroit Lubricator Company, 5900 Trumbull Avenue and the West Side Local 174, United Automobile Workers (CIO). Any employe with established seniority who joins the United States military service during a war will retain and accumulate seniority while in such service, the contract provides. -Detroit News, May 29

## CALCUTTA DOCKWORKERS ORGANIZED

This is both a true story and a vivid picture of the life and death contest in which the Indian workers are engaged. It is drawn from material supplied to an Indian paper "National Front", by the Secretary of the Bengal Labour Party. No trade unionist will read it unmoved, or without asking himself "How can I help them?"

A Comrade, yours and mine, is dying of T.B. His name is Yusuf, and he comes from Calcutta's dockland.

Yusuf was born of a fairly well-to-do peasant family of Ihayapur, a small village in Gaya. They owned some land, and worked some more for the landlord. They sent Yusuf to school when he was ten, but two years after the father died and the young family were soon pushed out of most of their land.

Yusuf had to become a man quickly, to help feed the family, and so at the age of 15, with a pack on his back, he left his village to journey towards Calcutta in search of work.

Yusuf, after years of tossing about from one job to another becomes a docker.

The wage packets, which are supposed to contain 25 rupees for each man, hold considerably less. The labour contractor opens each and quietly conjures a bit into his own pocket.

A worker protests and wants his whole money. The outraged contractor beats him up instead, before a hundred other workers, to teach them not to ask for what is their own.

### WORKERS SMOULDER

Indignation. The workers smoulder. Some suggest filing a case against the contractor, and they will pay the expenses from their wages.

A band of dockers approach Niharendu Dutt-Mazumdar.

"We want a Union like the one the metal workers of Garden Reach have. Help us to make one."

In February, 1934, the Port and Dock-workers' Union is formed. Mass meetings and rallies follow, thousands of restless dockers join, and Yusuf stands out in relief as a front rank fighter.

He forms a group of the most advanced, a group which is to become the fortress of the Union. Sitting close together in a little hut, listening enthralled, they hear amazing stories of the Paris Commune, the Chartist Movement, and the Russian Revolution. Yusuf, the only one who can write a few signs, takes down copious notes in a peculiar handwriting which nobody else can read. But Urdu books on Socialism and Communism are rare to find, so Yusuf's notes are read and re-read by him to the workers gathered together in the proletarian teashops. These notes spread elements of Marxist education throughout the dockside.

The fermenting trouble in the docks is coming to a head. The dockers are on the verge of strike.

They have to work hard, eleven hours at a stretch without break, on meagre pay, and the miserly Company steals another half-hour from them without paying for it, by ordering all men on board at 6-30 sharp, instead of 7 a.m., and making them begin work immediately.

Yusuf shows great ingenuity in dealing with the workers' problems, and finding solutions to them. Now he comes to the fore in a struggle against the stolen half-hour. Yes, all men on board by six-thirty, he says, but no single stroke of work until seven! The first signs of a stay-in strike.

The employers are mad with rage. A deckful of men leisurely enjoying the new dawn breaking over the water for one full half-hour. Yusuf glows with militancy, and the word goes round to the labor contractors - don't you take on that man, he is dangerous!

An orgy of arrests and persecution follow. Yusuf is arrested on a charge of criminal trespass.

There is great consternation among the dockers when their popular leader is taken from them. They, poor men without food, clothes and homes to suffice them, raise funds for his defence, and bail him out after the first hearing.

Yusuf, now unemployed, becomes a full time professional Union man.

### STRIKE!

Strike! Ships pile up in dock, not a hand to unload them. Workers from Bihar and Madras are brought, even Chinese, but hearing the urgent propaganda of the dockers struggling for their rights and the rights of all workers, they refuse to blackleg.

The Port and Dockworkers' Union has been declared illegal, but Yusuf, out of prison again, is energetically building up a new one. Though communists, employers and government do everything to undermine the work, he has even greater support from the workmen.

But starvation and unemployment, the deadliest weapons in the hands of the workers' enemy soon has its foulest poison working.

Yusuf contracts T.B.

He goes to a hospital while the police bring a charge of assault on a Serang against him. Yusuf is on a sick bed; the court is sentencing him to ten days' hard labour.

Yusuf comes out of hospital, cured. The Union is poor. They cannot find ten rupees for him. "Well, it is only for ten days," thinks Yusuf. "I'll go to prison."

One day a comrade reading the paper sees a short notice - a prisoner called Yusuf was carrying heavy loads when he spat blood and collapsed.



Yusuf, a thin little man, with hollow cheek bones and bright intelligent eyes, is lying in hospital with one lung gone and another affected. A doctor some months ago pronounced that he would be dead within five months but Yusuf says he is going to live.

In hospital, he writes in his quaint Urdu, how the workers will always be prey to the scourge of T.B. so long as they are down-trodden and exploited - until they are free.

In the evenings, the sick and coughing inmates of this poor dingy ward come and sit around frail Yusuf's bed and listen to his talk of Socialism and Communism. They listen until the feeble voice gives way, and nothing but a few wheezy breaths can be heard. He counts four of these poor mis-erables who have been converted to Socialism.

(Quoted from Empire (England), June, 1939).

## SUBSCRIBE TO REVOLT!

THE COMMUNISTS DISDAIN TO CONCEAL THEIR VIEWS AND AIMS. THEY OPENLY DECLARE THAT THEIR ENDS CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY BY THE FORCIBLE OVERTHROW OF ALL EXISTING SOCIAL CONDITIONS.

- Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels.

For publishing the second of the two sentences quoted above the January seventh issue of REVOLT was ruled unmailable. This ruling has been made the basis for forcing us to submit each issue for a ruling as to its mailability.

On April 20th Eugene L. Meyer published the same sentences in the New York Post.

The May 27th issue of REVOLT republished what Meyer wrote in the Post. This issue has been ruled mailable.

But the censorship is still in force. The Post Office is out to suppress revolutionary propaganda.

Help us fight the censorship!

Spread REVOLT! Become a subscriber! Order a bundle and distribute them! Send a contribution!

J O I N

T H E

L E A G U E !

# FRENCH RESERVISTS REVOLT

REPUBLISHED FROM LA JEUNE GARDE, MAY 1, ORGAN OF  
THE WORKER AND PEASANT SOCIALIST YOUTH

Workers of the factories and fields! Follow their example! Support their struggle!

The class of '36 has been recalled. For the third time, young workers and peasants have left their homes, their wives, their parents, have left the mine, the factory, the fields - for the barracks. A quiet departure. The newspapers which publish in great detail the military measures taken by the entire world maintain a stubborn silence on what is happening in France. This sinister silence makes the lads uneasy.

What! To return to the dismal lodgings, the stinking rats, the systematic and stupefying military "labor" and the asinine idleness of rest days, above all to the servile discipline of officers and under-officers.

The "reservists" have known this for several years. They did a month of "special duty" in September (the Munich crisis) - and now they begin their 26th month of service.

That's the three years . . .

However, in spite of the sorrows this recall has brought them - separation from wife, bride, parents, leaving their jobs - one hope remains to those who are called "reservists." Their mobilization papers state that they have been recalled for 21 days. For two weeks the lads bank on this fact strongly. All of a sudden, eight days before the scheduled discharge the "unattached" are summoned to the mess halls or to the barrack yards.

The officers kindly explain to them that the needs of national defense, the Hitler menace and the safeguarding of the empire require their remaining in the barracks for an "unlimited" time.

The "reservists" fall into the classification of "unattached", since the years of service which the French youth must give in the army now are divided into two periods. After the first period of two years is concluded, the workers and peasants are still "unattached" for a year. They can be called at any moment and for an unlimited time.

Ah! That excellent word! Unattached! Unattached also the "crust" of their wives, their children. Unattached their places in the factories and in the fields.

But the lads have understood. This is THE APPLICATION OF THE THREE YEAR SERVICE BEFORE IT HAS BECOME A LAW.

## FURY BREAKS OUT

The movement of protest begins at once. On the night of April 3rd, at the announcement of the good news that the reserves will be kept under the colors for an unlimited time, the 172nd R.I.F. of Strasbourg orders THE HUNGER STRIKE. Unusual excitement sweeps through the barrack yards. The anger of the young soldiers galvanizes them into the struggle against the military dictatorship, for the discharge. FOR TWO DAYS (APRIL 4 and 5) THE 172nd REFUSES TO DRILL.

But the example of the 172nd spreads like wildfire throughout the Strasbourg garrison. The next day the reservists of the First Engineers entered into the struggle. Same decision:

HUNGER STRIKE, gathering of almost all the lads in the court. THERE THEY FORMED A PROCESSION AND WENT TO THE FIRST BATTALION OF LIGHT INFANTRY TO DRAW THEM INTO THE MOVEMENT.

Unfortunately, the Infantrymen have left on maneuvers and the few soldiers present invite the demonstrators of the First Engineers to return the next night. The reservists of the First Engineers, like the 172nd, refuse to return to work.

## THE STRUGGLE OF THE RESERVISTS IS BETRAYED

A movement of extraordinary importance is in progress. The most serious struggle which has been conducted in a long time against the imperialist war has been set on foot. It must make unity and connection with the factories and the countryside where unrest is also spreading.

But the gentlemen of the Popular Front, the Blums, the Jouheauxs, the Thorezs maintain silence in their press. They know well that the movement is not confined to Strasbourg, but that it has extended to Metz, Morange, Arras, to numerous points on the Maginot line, and the defenders of the "Fatherland" are afraid to awaken the solidarity of the working class with the mobilized workers along the road of mutinies.

The bourgeoisie, the Stalinists, the reformists and the fascists remain silent. "Hush, not a word, less they be suppressed." It is necessary to stamp out the movement of the prisoners of the General Staff, the future "killed on the field of honor".

Solidarity! It is that which the traitors to communism, to socialism fear - the connection between the soldiers, workers and peasants in struggle against their direct enemies: the officer, the employer, the landowner. It was in this manner that the Russian Revolution developed in 1917.

It was only the youth and the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party, who, as soon as they were informed of the news, spread it among the working class and in the barracks. Jun 36 (June, 36) is the only paper which tells the facts and calls upon the reservists to establish their committees for cohesion in the struggle. But the feeble voice of the revolutionists is drowned out in the infernal discord of the great press, of the chauvinist radio. The demonstrators of Strasbourg, Metz, etc... feel their isolation in the country, they lose confidence in their movement, they permit themselves to be influenced by the deceitful argument of the officers: "Hitler threatens." Have they the sympathy, the support

of the working class, are their demands understood?

#### REPRESSION DESCENDS

The movement breaks up without clashes, without violence. The soldiers scatter and the officers and under-officers agitate on the Hitler specter among groups of reservists who no longer have any plan. Little by little the soldiers, now broken up, return to work, to drill. This will be the end of the movement.

The "ringleaders" are carefully trailed, the prisons are filled with a great number of "locked-up as an example to others".

THE RESERVISTS ARE BROKEN UP WITHOUT END. THEY ARE SENT IN LITTLE SQUADS TO SMALL VILLAGES FAR FROM THE FRONTIER INTO THE MIDDLE OF A POPULATION IN THE MAIN HOSTILE.

At the 172nd R.I.F., since the beginning of the movement, the General Staff had taken precautions to surround the reservists with Mobile Guards. The bourgeoisie sensed fully the gravity of such a protest in a regiment like the 172nd which constitutes the key of a movement which could become generalized and find an echo in the discontent rising throughout the country as a result of the unpopular measures of the government. Violent movements could break out, the growth of which would have posed problems which the apparatus of bourgeois repression could not have been able to solve so quickly.

#### THE ERROR OF THE RESERVISTS

The movements of protest of the reservists in the beginning of April were absolutely spontaneous, like all the civil or military struggles of these last months.

Deprived of direction, of objective, impeded by the entire experience of these past years, which witnessed every working class movement crushed and betrayed by the Stalinist and reformist organizations, the reservists, after an outburst of indignation, did not know how to create the organs capable of broadening the struggle.

Revolutionary, soldiers, PSOPists (members of the Workers and Peasants Socialist Party), and anarchists strove to spread the slogan: COMMITTEES OF RESERVISTS. Numerous inscriptions appeared on the walls, but there was no material of special propaganda and very little confidence among the reservists, who nevertheless received the slogan with sympathy. The absence of a driving core, of a COMMITTEE DELIBERATING AND DECIDING THE FORMS OF STRUGGLE, permitted the officers to "work" the small groups of scattered and confused soldiers after the first hours of struggle.

The reservists could have awakened the proletariat of Strasbourg, Metz, etc. . . by demonstration in the streets; they could have sent delegates systematically into the other regiments and refused to leave their positions; they could have issued small mimeographed papers, manifestos, and disseminated them in the principal cities, in Paris, etc.

#### DEMOCRATIC ILLUSIONS

But not only did the reservists not find the necessary form of organization: THE COMMITTEE. They were also hamstrung by the democratic illusions

developed by four years of the Popular Front. They believed in the word of the officers.

The boys said:

"I am fed up with being called every six months. Let us make the war at once. After settling with Hitler's hash, then we will perhaps have peace."

And the officers speculated on this reasoning to break up the movement.

No, the French capitalists do not wish to defeat German fascism. M. Daladier has not smashed the French fascists; he will not crush the German fascists. The only ones who will destroy Hitler WILL BE THE GERMAN SOLDIERS AND WORKERS. But the day they will commence this task, they will find arrayed against them the Daladiers and Chamberlains of the whole world. The French workers and peasants have nothing in common with these people. The only road to the overthrow of Hitler is that of the bitter struggle against Daladier and his General Staff.

#### SOLIDARITY

Workers and peasants, not yet mobilized, it is to you that all those in the barracks, reservists or actives, turn. Your struggle is a common one. You must prove that the working class does not abandon its brothers into the hands of the bourgeoisie. You must show your solidarity with the "reservists".

In every factory, in every quarter, in every village, form your committees for the defense of soldiers and your soldiers' fund. Every factory should sponsor a barrack, a company. The families of the soldiers should demand the discharge and the payment of lost wages.

Solidarity and unity of the barracks, factories and fields - that is the road to victory!

#### THE LESSON

In spite of the blow of last November 30 (defeat of the general strike) the working class is not crushed. The struggle of the reservists shows this clearly.

In the development of events, the most wholesome forms of the revolutionary struggle reappeared. Thus, the same men who said: "Let us finish with Hitler once and for all," answered the officers in the heat of their demonstrations: "Hitler will reply to you." - "So it goes." And they went to other barracks to win them over to the struggle, even though by this they would weaken the capacity of resistance of the French army through a broad movement of mutinies against the bourgeois military apparatus.

This is REVOLUTIONARY DEFEATISM! To weaken our own bourgeoisie in order better to overthrow it....

It is necessary to organize for the struggles to come. The bourgeoisie will be merciless. But through the shootings and the persecutions will be created the new communist international of youth, who will lead the

masses of young workers toward the world revolution.

Long live the struggle of the soldiers, the workers and the peasants against Daladier, against Hitler for the socialist United States of Europe!

When the British, French and American workers show in action that they have learned the lessons of the military strike of the French reservists, the world revolution will be well on its way.

## LABOR FAKERS COVER UP ROOSEVELT

Some members of Congress have deliberated from time to time on the feasibility of reinstating Federal direct "relief" instead of W.P.A. And though it has had some response, it has not yet been accepted as the capitalist program for handling the unemployed situation. One of the reasons for this is that the workers are opposed to it. This has given the labor fakers a chance to shout from the house tops for the continuation and extension of W.P.A.

John L. Lewis' demand for a guarantee of three million W.P.A. jobs means that he wants to continue to strangle the organization of the unemployed and line them up as an integral part of the New Deal war machine. If the head of the C.I.O. really intended to ameliorate the conditions of the unemployed workers, he would undertake to organize them into fighting unions. This traitor cares no more about organizing the impoverished W.P.A. workers than does the red-baiting reactionary Mr. Green of the A.F.L. about encouraging unionization of industrial workers. Mr. Lewis is playing the role of an arch labor faker and can never represent the interests of the unemployed.

Roosevelt's attacks on the toiling masses is being ably aided by the treacherous leadership of the Stalinist, Herbert Benjamin, and the Socialist, David Lasser, of the Workers Alliance of America and other lesser lights of the same stripe. Despite their apparently divergent political origins these Administration stooges are in agreement, however, in selling their own members as well as the great mass of unorganized unemployed and W.P.A. workers down the river. These scoundrels who can heartlessly continue to mislead tens of millions of men, women and children who are dying of slow starvation will never be digested by the working masses, and the day is not so far off when the working class will vomit them out of its midst.

The fake demands of John Lewis upon Congress and the howling cries of Lasser and Benjamin is a smoke screen that covers up the Roosevelt plan to cut the present low standards of relief. They should be fought most strenuously by ever sincere worker.

The collaborationists who are at present almost in complete control of all W.P.A. unions will hold their membership to the smallest possible numbers for the simple reason that they cannot permit organized militant workers to interfere with the deceitful government policy.

In order to better their conditions, the W.P.A. workers together with the unemployed on direct "relief" should organize one united fight for adequate relief and unemployment compensation.

BEN PALIFERRO

## SHOP TALK

NEW YORK, May 27.- Today I showed the workers in the shop a clipping from a newspaper announcing that the boss we work for had a profit of \$75,000.00 during the past year. "Part of that is from the wage-cut we got last month," one worker said. "All of it is the result of our labor," I answered. "If we didn't work the boss wouldn't have anything." "If we didn't work we wouldn't eat," someone said. "Well, we do work and we have just enough to eat, sometimes," I replied.

"Look, we are 100 workers in this factory. The newspaper says the wages paid were \$104,000.00 for one year. That means an average of \$20.00 a week for each worker. The bosses profit was almost three-fourth of all our wages put together.

"I make four gears a day for which I am paid \$5.00 a day. The boss sells the gears for \$10.00 each and \$40.00 for the four. In two hours I produce one which is valued at twice my day's pay, but for the other six hours I have to work for the boss' profit."

"I get it," said the machinist. "I get docked twenty-five cents when I come ten minutes late. I get sixty cents an hour or six cents for every ten minutes. But because I'm worth to the boss twenty-five cents for ten minutes, he takes it anyway."

"Right you are," I answered. "Now, what happens when we have to exchange our wages for food and clothing? We don't pay for a pair of shoes the price the worker gets for making them. We have to pay for the boss' profit."

"We workers should do away with such a system that robs us. Under a communist society we will produce for use and not for profit."

D. WHITMAN.

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### STATEMENT BY BENTLEY AND RUSSO ON JOINING THE LEAGUE

DETROIT, May 26.- We the undersigned members of the R.W.L. (Oehler group) join the R.W.L. (REVOLT group). Our reasons are that in their evaluation of objective conditions the Oehlerites ignore the important factor of class relations. They confine themselves to an analysis of economic conditions and thereby render themselves hopelessly sectarian.

In the Negrete (Blackwell) defense the Oehlerites were guilty of crassest hypocrisy, yelling for unconditional class struggle defense while at the same time participating in the Ferrero-Sallitto defense with much the same policy which they condemned in the Blackwell Defense Committee. Financially the Oehlerites are guilty of certain indiscretions which we have been made satisfied of by documentary evidence.

For these and other reasons we hereby break all relations with the Oehler group and affiliate ourselves to the REVOLT group for the purpose of working to build the American Marxist party.

(signed) ELEANOR BENTLEY  
VICTOR RUSSO

# FIGHT CENSORSHIP

of the  
**LABOR PRESS**

by the  
**POST OFFICE**

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## STOP THE CENSORSHIP OF REVOLT

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*"The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They*  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ (censored) ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~

*"Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The  
proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to  
win. Workingmen of all countries, unite!"*

*—Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.*

The sentence censored appeared in the January 7, 1939 issue of  
REVOLT. Other passages in the same issue are also banned by the Post Office.

On February 13 Post Office Solicitor, Vincent B. Miles, ruled the  
January 7 issue unmailable. On February 16 Detroit Postmaster, Roscoe B.  
Huston, advised REVOLT was "under suspicion" and "will be scrutinized  
very closely." On March 6 Huston held up the March 4 issue pending a rul-  
ing by Miles. On March 15 Huston advised that Miles had ruled that the  
March 4 issue could be mailed, but that "This ruling . . . covers only the  
March 4 issue." Huston added, "Kindly see that copies of subsequent issues  
are presented at this office . . . for submission to the Solicitor."

The April 8 issue was held up thirteen days.

The April 29 issue was held up seven days.

The May 27 issue was held up seven days.

This is censorship of a labor paper for its Marxist views. Unless it is  
stopped it will be extended to other labor papers.

Help us stop it!

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Issued by The Central Committee of the Revolutionary Workers League  
of the United States.

Box 141, Alfred Street Station, Detroit, Michigan