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WORLD OUTLOOK

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Draft Resolution

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I--The Hungarian Revolution is the Vantage Point

The present world situation, far from invalidating the historic accomplishments of the proletariat in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, makes it more imperative than ever to begin with the high points achieved in that struggle for total freedom.

From that vantage point we will understand its opposite --the counter-revolution in France and general bourgeois offensive against the working class in America. Without that vantage point, we will understand neither the new stage of revolution, nor the first act of the counter-revolution begun with De Gaulle's rise to power.

The Hungarian Revolution released the energies of the people--the workers, the youth, the intellectuals, the women, and even the children. All challenged the awesome might of Russian totalitarianism as the occupying power as well as its puppets, the AVO, the Hungarian Communist Party, and the State. The climax was reached with the establishment of Workers' Councils in the factories and the arming of the people to defend the Revolution.

The Hungarian Revolution settled once and for all the questions of theory which Marxists have debated for years:

1) Can the workers, without a previously worked out "program," establish their own organizations of power?

Overnight, in the heat of battle, the Hungarian Workers' Councils assumed all function of management of industry and government. The parties and papers that appeared with the suddenness of the revolution itself had no bolder program than these Workers' Councils.

2) Is a "vanguard party" necessary "to lead the workers to power?"

The Hungarian Workers proved through action that they themselves carried through the revolution, smashing the occupying power and its AVO as well as achieving fraternisation with part of the Russian Army. They were defeated only by the overwhelming superior might of the constantly new divisions and tanks sent in by Russia, in face of none of the other countries coming to the defense of the Hungarian revolutionaries.

3) Does the nationalised property mean a better way of life for the workers?

The Great Hungarian Revolution was only the highest point of revolt against nationalised property as the greatest tyranny. The revolt was actually begun three years back in East Germany, on June 17, 1953, which was followed by the revolt of slave laborers in Vorkuta in Russia itself. It then moved to Poznan, Poland, which inspired the Hungarian Revolution. Never again will it be necessary to argue these questions with the faint hearted, or to tolerate their complaints about the "backwardness" of the workers. The Hungarian Revolution has underlined with rivers of blood the fact that the workers have achieved a revolution on a much higher plane, historically, than 1917.

4) Finally, it was this Revolution that initiated the beginning of the disintegration of the CP's in Western Europe-- something that the self-styled vanguard groupings have failed to do in the three decades since the death of Lenin and the formation of the Trotskyist movement. The destruction of the Hungarian Revolution by Russian Communism had no more to do with the lack of a "vanguard party" than had the destruction of the 1905 Revolution by Russian Tsarism.

There can be no genuine unification of theory and practice in the tradition of Marxism unless we face boldly (1) the utter bankruptcy of thought of the existing vanguard parties, (2) the spontaneity and maturity of the revolutionary movement from practice toward not only theory, but a new society, and realize (3) that neither the constant repetition of the need of a vanguard party nor the in toto rejection of that concept will answer the need of our epoch, which is nothing short of a new unity of theory and practice based on the movement from practice. An indispensable prerequisite of that is the theoreticians' acceptance, of their responsibilities.

A constantly changing concept of vanguard, based on the relationship of the masses to the party, and the party to where the masses stood, is the essence of Leninism. The 1905 Revolution changed Lenin's 1902-3 concept of vanguard. Again on the eve of October, 1917, he threatened to go to the sailors and resign from the Political Committee because the masses were more revolutionary than the party. Once again in the last years of his life he pointed to the need of "the non-party masses checking the party."

The repetition of the "need of a vanguard" did not turn the Fourth International into a mass movement that led the revolutions following World War II. On the contrary, they have ended as a tail end to Stalinism. But neither did the rejection of "the party to lead" become a theoretical focal point for revolutionary regroupment or even do away with the total isolation of these groupings from the mass movement. It is time to draw a balance sheet on the basis of the actual world situation.

II--The Current Scene

The rise of Charles de Gaulle to power in France marks the end of an era in which the Communist Party and Socialist Party, while composing the majority of Parliament, subverted the aspirations of the working class to take power into its own hands for which it has striven since the end of World War II. Such was the mood of the workers in 1946-7 that radicals joked: "It would take only a phone call from Moscow and the CP could take power." The call never came, and the French Communist Party wanted to receive it as little as Russian Communism intended to make it because present-day Communism, even more than traditional competitive and monopoly capitalism, is deathly afraid of workers' power.

That is the key. Without the power of the Russian Army at hand, or near by, to control the workers, no Communist Party anywhere will take the risk of releasing the creative power of the workers through a revolution.

In France (and in Italy, which has the biggest party in Western Europe) the CP has played the game of bourgeois parliamentary politics, offering illusions and promises to the workers while hasing themselves of the petty-bourgeoisie. As France passed from crisis to crisis the CP operated in a bloc with right wing and centrist parties to overthrow socialists and centrist governments. The governments overthrown played the game of being liberal at home while conducting imperialist wars abroad. What historic irony that De Gaulle is the one to offer Algerians political equality, which no popular front or socialist government has done. But he has not thereby stopped the Algerian revolution for full independence. Nor can he. He will continue to send to their death the flower of French youth which has for the past thirteen years gone from compulsory military training directly to their graves.

Now that De Gaulle, in the tradition of Mussolini and Hitler, has dissolved the Chamber of Deputies, the CP can talk as if it opposed De Gaulle but the fact is that they did everything to bring him to power for it is they who have the largest voting bloc in Parliament; it is they, with the Socialists, who formed the majority of the elected deputies; it is they who control the trade unions and have the mass base. And yet it needed merely the threat of the military--for the extreme fascists in France have not been able to this day to build a mass following--and a handful of plotters like Delbecque, Soustelle, and the "socialist" Lacoste, for the CP to consent to empower Pflimlin to "keep order" and forbid demonstrations on the part of the great masses. This betrayal of the working class led to the apparent apathy of the French masses during the rise of De Gaulle. Just as the tail wagged the dog and Algeria brought the end of the Fourth Republic, so both contending world powers--Russia and America--are running to woo De Gaulle to maintain the balance of power in their respective behalfs.

The crisis of capitalism is sharpest in France because their more backward economy makes it the weakest link in world capital. Under the conditions of a disproportionately large number of small shopkeepers--the great number of small capitalists whose immediate interests conflict with the larger concentration of capital evolved recently--state capitalism in France has been unable to keep pace with the rest of the industrially developed world. Capitalist France cannot play the role of balance of power between the two poles of world state capital--Russia and America. But she does serve to illustrate the depth and totality of the world crisis which will not stand still until one of these two poles of state capitalism unleashes World War III.

III--The Two Poles of World Capital--US & Russia

The United States today is the seat of the counter-revolution on a world scale. In its struggle with the other pole of counter-revolution--Russia--for world domination, it uses its power, military force and financial aid to corrupt, buy, intimidate any country or public official that is for sale. Where it can it does so on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Food, cash, gifts, and loans are used all the way from Yugoslavia and Poland to the islands of Indonesia and Japan to buy loyalty to the ever shifting goals of the State Department. Yet, never in history has the prestige of the United States as a world power been so low in the minds of men. A recent public opinion poll showed that even among its strongest ally--Britain--a majority voted that it believed that Russia would outstrip the United States technologically.

The American working class is suffering from both depression and inflation. Automation, speedup, high prices and high taxes drive them into a state of tension where at any moment they explode into wildcats. The Negro people have risen up against segregation and written new pages in the history of humanity's struggle for freedom by their magnificent actions in Montgomery, Alabama, Little Rock, Arkansas, and presently in their joint struggles in the North against the labor bureaucracy.

Politically, neither the Socialist nor the Communist parties exercise any influence among the great masses in the US. Other radical parties, Trotskyists of all kinds, seek unsuccessfully a broad popular front movement in order to lead the workers in taking over the role of the despised labor bureaucracy, but the workers will have nothing to do with them or other union caucuses. All the orthodox Trotskyist organizations have been able to accomplish is to provide cover for the totally discredited Communists, while the other wing of Trotskyism (Schachtman) begs for cover in the CP.

The American capitalist class has grown far more aggressive than ever before. Not since the CIO has been established have anti-union candidates for office appeared so openly as now. While reactionary Congressional committees, like the McClellan Committee, propose union regulating laws aimed at breaking the unions, candidates like

Senator Knowland seek office by openly sponsoring such union busting measures as "right to work laws," "Right to hire laws," demand unbearable labor productivity with the least number of workers. This is the latest attempt to bring about open shopism. The labor bureaucracy, which has disregarded the workers' desires for the shorter workweek and entirely new working conditions which openly challenge automation with the question of what kind of labor should man perform, has succeeded only in being kicked in the teeth by management. For the first time in twenty-one years the auto workers are working without a union contract. There is no doubt that open shopism is the goal of management, but they have underestimated the strength of the American working class, their militancy and their aspirations. Instead they naturally look at the Administration, which is halving their offensive against the American working class by its offensive on a world scale against the colonial revolutions and rushing headlong to the support of De Gaulle, who has suddenly become the Administration's favorite. Russia is only a single step behind them.

The ascent of Sputnik I into the skies has dramatically stressed the fact that the statement of Marx--that the advanced country shows the backward one the mirror of its future--is now true in reverse. Given the world state of technological development, the backward country, on the road to state capitalism, shows the advanced country the mirror of its development. On both sides of the Iron Curtain the move is toward totalitarianism, forced labor camps, one party statism. Actually this truth of industrial development has been evident since the First Five Year Plan was introduced into Russia, but only with the break of America's monopoly of the A-Bomb did the recognition of that truth hit with full force.

The ironic thing is that, with the Sputnik, Russia, which since the Hungarian Revolution stood stripped of any halo that might have been attached to it by the 1917 Revolution, recaptured the awe of the Trotskyists. In the global struggle for the minds of men, the minds that fell first were those to whom nationalized property equals workers state even as now Sputnik places machine above man. Henceforth it is clear that the struggle against one's own bourgeoisie is not necessarily the mark of a revolutionary who truly wishes to build a totally new human society.

IV--The Colonial Revolutions

Since the end of World War II the colonial peoples everywhere have been in a state of constant revolt. The British Empire lost India, Egypt, Burma, Palestine, Ghana, the British West Indies. Cyprus is still in open revolt. The French Empire has lost Indo-China, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia, and is now in a life and death struggle in Algeria. Indonesia threw out the Dutch. Africa seethes with a new nationalism and will not forever be denied independence. The victory of the British counter-revolution in Kenya has neither stopped the aspirations nor the struggle of the Kenyans.

A new nationalism has emerged out of these colonial revolts that tries to steer a course between two mighty giants of state capitalism struggling for world power. In every case--from mighty China to little Burma--the nationalist regimes have a tendency to jump over the stage of private accumulation of capital by individual capitalists and land immediately in state capitalism. The entire national product is often bartered or sold for new capital to establish new industries. The numbers of the proletariat are greatly increased as industrialization progresses.

Burma has emerged into state capitalism through the road of the Social Democracy plus Buddhism rather than through the CP, but conditions of the workers are the same. India has tried to have its Plans more along the line of "competitive monopoly" rather than outright state capitalism, but there the millions of unemployed are so great they are not even counted.

In the short span of ten years Israel jumped from nationhood into state capitalism via the Histadrut, the leading trade union of the land: it is the largest single capitalist.

Nasser in Egypt seems to be quite capable of playing both sides against each other at the expense of the Arab masses whose conditions are no better now than they were under British imperial rule.

In Indonesia, Sukarno leads a path between both world powers that satisfies neither. Civil war rages over which faction of state capitalism shall have the right to exploit the resources and the people.

In 1950 it looked as if Communism in its Chinese form would be the greatest force of attraction for all who were against Western imperialism. Russia certainly used that great force both to precipitate the Korean War and to gain for itself greatest room of maneuverability in "neutralist Asia and Africa." Surely Formosa stands for all that is decadent and corrupt in the regimes propped up by American bayonets and fleet. And yet we know from Mao's speech of "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend" that the opposition to his rule is widespread. From the very beginning of the revolution Mao did not wish to be burdened by a proletariat. He bypassed Shanghai and the urban centers until they were surrounded by the Eighth Route Peasant Army; in the Chinese Constitution, the Army is on an equal with the Party as the centre of power. Its victory over Chiang Kai-Shek and the unfurled banner for anti-imperialist revolt did not, however, conquer all of Asia. Burma did not go Communist; planning won in a civil war against Communism. Viet-Nam was split in two, and throughout Asia and Africa the masses are taking a second look at this new type of anti-capitalist state capitalism. Somewhere, somehow, the great myth of the self-sacrificing "all-people-loving" Asian revolutionary in the form of Mao-Tse-Tung or Ho Chi-Minh was not the unifying principle, the rallying banner for the colonial peoples, as the Third International was in Lenin's days.

The stream of refugees from Communist Viet-Nam were by no means only the landlords but the peasant masses. We know that the people of the other half of Viet-Nam threw out the French after victory over Communist Viet-Nam was won. The question is: what is the new element which makes the people aware of the state capitalist bureaucratic character of present day Communism?

We will not know for sure until the masses there speak for themselves. There is nothing as dramatically anti-Communist in the colonial world as was the Hungarian Revolution in the satellites.

What we do know is that Communist totalitarianism which marches under the banner of Marxism-Leninism is "revolutionary" only when that is against its greatest competitor, America. It accepts Nasser today and will accept De Gaulle tomorrow as it accepted Nazism in 1939 and Allied Imperialism in 1941.

The greatest shame of Trotskyism is that even where it is a force—and its only semi-mass gains are in the colonial world—it ends by playing second-fiddle to the Communists in Viet-Nam and it is doing that now in Ceylon. It is not Trotskyism that is our concern. It is the responsibility of us as theoreticians to see the new revolutionary forces in the peasantry that have always been noted by Lenin, especially so in the Second Congress of the C. I.

V—Responsibilities of Theoretical Groupings

Any analysis of the objective situation, even one as cursory as ours, cannot fail to meet the challenge to re-examine its own foundations, principles and perspectives in the light of the objective situation. There is nothing new in the betrayal of the Communists and the Socialists, nor in the inadequacies and tail-endism of the Trotskyists. We must finally come to a confrontation between the demands of the objective situation and the realities of small groupings like ourselves who have broken with all those who go under the banner of Marxism—not alone Communism but also Trotskyism—but have nevertheless failed to become a focal point for revolutionary regroupment.

This may be our first attempt for international contact and may be limited to information and distribution of each other's views. Yet we cannot begin any sort of new collaboration, no matter how limited, without facing the reality of the past ten years, or at least the seven years since the final break with Trotskyism. The impelling motive for such a re-examination is precisely the objective situation: 1) the coming of De Gaulle to power shows the barbarous offensive CM which the bourgeoisie feels free to embark when it

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sees the impotence of the established workers' parties; 2) the Marxist opposition to these established parties cannot constantly limit itself to criticizing others; it must answer why the state capitalist tendency the world over has itself not become a greater force either theoretically or in the class struggle.

As with all Marxist analysis, we must begin with production and the specific stage of workers' revolt. The new stage, technologically, began with Automation and the 1949-50 miners' strike. Since the workers themselves had moved the question of labor productivity from the question of fruits of labor--wages--to the kind of labor, this demanded a re-examination of our philosophic foundation.

Three years later the tocsin sounded for the beginning of the end of Russian totalitarianism. The East German Revolution which was followed by a revolt in the slave labor camps of Vorkuta within Russia itself shook the whole theory of the alleged invincibility of state capitalism to its foundations. Yet CORRESPONDENCE, which began on the basis of state capitalism and workers' revolt and considered its very manner of writing, editing and publishing this workers' organ a blow to bureaucracy "as such," fell apart when the war clouds over Formosa led the American bourgeoisie in its McCarthy-induced hysteria to make its listing.

Even before then, the truth is that with the break of Yugoslavia from Moscow and the emergence of Mao's China, the state capitalist theory had come to a standstill, limiting itself merely to summarizing and repeating what had been said. The only thing new that we added was that philosophy should become integral. How could it achieve this transformation if the grand result of all the "oughts" was that philosophy cannot any longer answer these philosophical problems--only the proletariat can! This is one of those truths that has always been used by theoreticians to avoid and evade their specific responsibilities. Of course only the class struggle will give the final answer; the point is what is your responsibility as a grouping that functions and supposedly has a raison d'être whether the class struggle is out in the open or is quiescent.

Lenin has left the indispensable measuring rod for the Marxist theoretician in the method by which he met the challenge of the collapse of the Second International. The re-examination of the philosophic foundations meant that from then on dialectics was not "philosophy" but the essence of politics. Still 1915 allowed him to keep his Philosophic Notebooks to himself. We can no longer do so. Where, in 1915, the core of the dialectics was the unity of opposites, to us, in 1958, the core of the dialectic is nothing short of a materialist reading of the Absolute Idea, or the unity of theory and practice based on the movement from practice. The responsibility of the theoreticians must begin precisely here, and must be stated openly.

The idealist features of the Absolute Idea are quite secondary to the logic which historically impelled Hegel to return from nature, or practice, to mind, or theory. Whether or not this is also evident in Hegel's own works which, though restricted to thought, have as their constant points of reference the development of humanity itself as a development of stages of freedom from Greek society to the French Revolution, is not the issue. The crucial point is that it is our contemporary world, our own age of absolutes, where revolution and counter-revolution are so interlocked, that has compelled the Absolute Idea to emerge out of its abstract context and come into head-on collision with the concept of the vanguard party.

The concept of "the party to lead" has become a pillow for intellectual sloth, the actual stumbling block to a unification of theory and practice on new foundations. At the same time the opposite side of the same coin is the concept of those who reject the concept of the vanguard party in toto for it then has become an evasion of their tasks, their role, their responsibilities, their relationship to the mass movement. Where the impotence of Trotskyism is not alone in the lack of a mass following but in their concept "to lead," to plan "for" the workers, to substitute themselves for the capitalist class and rule in a state capitalist manner, the isolation of the opponents of vanguardism from the mass movement has contributed to the apparent apathy of the French masses. The appeal for Workers Councils can be as "sloganized" as any minimum program when it appears suddenly out of thin air, with no theoretical preparation.

It is an evasion of responsibility and perspective to think that the mass movement alone must give all the answers. A new epoch opened with World War II and the failure of fascism's attempt to centralize European economy in preparation for world conquest. The new protagonists--US and Russia--for world power have now "advanced" to the point where civilization itself is within the orbit of an ICBM. Our age must therefore answer with as challenging a theoretical unfolding of perspectives as was the case with Marx in 1848, 1864 and 1871 and with Lenin in 1914 and 1917. But it must be for our age. The maturity of our age demands the totality of the Marxist Humanist approach and forbids leaving the philosophy as the province of the theoretician.

A materialist reading of Hegel's Absolute Knowledge took one form in Marx's time--the general absolute law of capitalist development in the unemployed army, and its opposite--the new passions and forces for a new society. That is to say, the dialectic of bourgeois society was concrete, while the elements of the new society present in the old were, of necessity, general.

The dialectic took another form in Lenin's time where the objective world connections and transformation into opposite were the predominant features of the world of World War I. The new transformation into opposite of the workers' state itself had barely begun, much less been consummated by January, 1924, when Lenin died. Hence, the outstanding feature seemed to be "merely" the emergence of a new rude personality called Stalin who had a passion for bossing and who should be removed from power.

Because Trotskyism when no further than that when state capitalism had already developed, it has inevitably degenerated where it is nothing but a left cover for Communism (Stalinism first and Khrushchevism now).

A new point of departure is in the ever deeper strata of the proletariat from America that has raised the alienation of labor in a more concrete form than ever could have been in Marx's time. A new point of departure is the Hungarian Revolution where the freedom fighters did not separate politics from economics. A new point of departure in theory cannot fall short of this challenge from actuality.

We in America think that MARKISM AND FREEDOM is such an attempt, the first comprehensive attempt since the death of Lenin to restate Marxism neither as dogma nor as ready-made answers to the problems neither Marx nor Lenin faced. This study, from the vantage point of the new problems of state capitalism, is done on the basis of the movement from practice, not only to theory, but to a new society. It is not, and does not pretend or wish to be, a programmatic document.

MARKISM AND FREEDOM is, and claims to present, a theoretical basis for the clarification of minds which is the first pre-requisite for Marxist groups, for both serious analysis and actual activity in the class struggle. The masses will do what they will do. We cannot substitute for them. But we must know whether we are bound in more comprehensive terms than has been the case for the past seven years.

We feel that there can be no vision for a new society without the total reorganization of thought, and the complementary experience of a workers' newspaper such as NEWS & LETTERS as both weapon in the class struggle and the ground for continuous deepening of theory. We cannot tell others what they should do; every section must work this out for itself. But we can tell them that the American experience, which combined the going to the workers with a paper edited by a worker, and the coming back from them with their experience as the present-day ground for a restatement of Marxian philosophy for our epoch, is what we have done.

Just as this Draft Resolution began with the high points reached by the proletariat in the Hungarian Revolution,

so each section must begin an examination of itself not only on the basis of an analysis of the current situation, but on a foundation as comprehensive as MARXISM and FREEDOM. The wholeness of Marxist Humanism is the only possible polarizing force.

A first step toward that end is the establishment of an Information Bureau. Its duty would be to establish regular communication between the participating groups whose works are seriously distributed in every country. At the same time it would initiate correspondence with non-participating groups, make regular reports of the development of the class struggle in each country and the group's relationship to it. The purpose of all this would be to lay the foundation for a Marxist regroupment.