

May 8, 1944

Political Committee
Workers Party

Dear Comrades:

Enclosed is a resume of my Russian article in the 9 single-spaced pages allowed me. I accept this P. C. decision under protest. No letter of explanation or answer was made to my letter of appeal of April 3, 1944. No attempt has been made by the P. C. to explain its action which violates the spirit of the decisions of the 1941 and 1944 Party conventions regarding publication of discussion materials on the Russian question. Nor has the P.C. bothered to discuss its decision with me. In my opinion such an authoritarian action and such a superficial attitude toward a serious contribution are not in consonance with the best traditions of Bolshevism.

Comradely,

Walter J. ...

8982

Political Committee,
Workers Party
NYC

Dear Comrades:

I have just read the current issue of the New International and noticed that a discussion article on the Russian question has been published. In the course of this article the economic developments in Russia, the nature of the state and relevant questions have all been posed. Also, in the document on Capitalism Barbarism or Socialism in the October 1944 issue of the N.I. there were indications of a position on the Russian question which pointed so strongly in a certain direction that it was necessary for the P. C. specifically to disassociate itself from the position there indicated.

Under the circumstances I wish to remind the P.C. of what has happened to my attempts to bring before the membership and the readers of the NI my studies on the Russian question and the political conclusions I have drawn from them. I quote from my letter of appeal addressed to the P.C. on April 3, 1944:

"1) The National Convention held in October 1941 unanimously decided that the Russian discussion should continue in the public press as well as in the internal bulletin. I believed that the time has come for some party member to make an original study of the Russian question and examine the various theories in the light of the most complete available information and facts. It took me one year to do so. During this time I examined all the material available not only in the Library of Congress but throughout all libraries in the U.S. that have Russian collections. I also reexamined all the material that appeared in the Russian Opposition Bulletin, which included some material not translated into English. At the end of this time I drafted my findings and conclusions in a document of 155 pages.

....
"2) The question now was: how to present this mass of material to the membership. I decided to divide the study into two parts, the first, as far as humanly possible, a statement of the economic findings; the second part, an account of the social classes arising on the economic structure and the method of functioning of the Russian society. This included naturally the political conclusions which flowed from this analysis. Economic evaluations, without the necessary political conclusions, are a typical practice of petty-bourgeois liberal apologists. I further reduced the material to a total of 100 pages....

"3) On December 1, 1942, I handed in Part I to Com. Gates who was the editor of the NI. I informed him of the division I had made. He accepted the division.... Part I was serially published in the NI of Dec. '42, Jan. and Feb. '43. In the Feb. NI there appeared an editorial note to the effect that these articles were 'discussion material'. I immediately protested. In the letter of March 7, 1943 I wrote:

'It is, in my opinion, false to call facts gathered in a year of research work in original documents "discussion material." I most certainly do not consider that I have "discussed" the subject on which I have made such an extensive study. You will recall that when I handed in my MS (cf. also my letter of transmittal) I stated that I went to the trouble of writing in a completely mechanical manner dividing facts from political conclusions, because I was anxious

8983

that at least the facts be set down straight, so that we have at least the same factual basis in drawing our varying political conclusions. I believe you complimented me for doing so, stating that it is the way research work should be presented. If, since then, you changed your mind, that is your privilege. But, what it seems to me, you are not entitled to do is not to inform me of your changed intentions.... Had I been informed of that I would have taken back the MS and rewritten it as I had originally intended to and as is the more natural way to write, that is, draw my political conclusions along with my material evidence."

"4) In August 1943 I handed in Part II, which was 50 pages... After a lapse of six weeks, Com. Shachtman, the new editor of the NI, informed me that he refused to publish this in the NI and that length was only a secondary reason for the refusal.... I resubmitted the article without protest for publication as an internal bulletin.

"5) For five months thereafter I heard nothing from Com. Shachtman. During this time I never raised the question. Meanwhile we had our national Convention. Here we had reaffirmed the motion of the previous convention that the Russian question be included in the topics open to discussion both in the public press and in the internal bulletin.

"7) On March 23, 1944 I was finally informed by Com. Gates that the article is "to conform to the regulation size -- 8 pages, decided on a long time ago."

"This, I submit, is a most extraordinary procedure. I never heard of such a ruling except for the pre-convention period. The article was not submitted in a pre-convention period and was not concerned with any question on the convention agenda.... The article was submitted 9 months ago and I now hear for the first time that it is supposed "to conform to regulation size." In other words, the PC is asking a party member to cut down her political views on a subject as important as the Russian question to one-sixth of its present size.....

"Whatever may be my views on the Russian question, I attempted to give some idea of the functioning of the Soviet economy. I attempted to show that the law of value still operated and I did this by means of as careful and exhaustive analysis as possible of both of the modus operandi and of the statistics of the Soviet economy, crises, wages, etc. from year to year. This attempt, in my opinion, should be considered valuable, if only as a basis of discussion in any circle where serious study of a serious political question is undertaken, and it is incomprehensible to me that the PC can suggest that this and all the other material be condensed into eight pages. It is unfair to me, and unfair to the membership and it does not reflect a serious scientific attitude to a political problem."

When the above appeal was rejected, I cut the article to P.C. specifications and, under protest, submitted it yet once again. That was May 8, 1944.

~~xxxxxxx~~ Ten months/since elapsed, and the eight-pager has remained unpublished. I am driven to the conclusion that the PC has no intention of publishing anything that I write on Russia either in the NI or in the internal bulletin. I protest the treatment to which I have been subjected, and ask that the material I have submitted be returned to me.

I want it clearly understood that I have not changed my position on the Russian question in the slightest. Nevertheless

-3-

during these years that I have been trying to get an article published the situation both in Russia, as well as the stage of discussion on Russia both in the Party and outside of it have changed. They now place the discussion on a new basis and it is on that basis that anything written by me on the Russian question shall be done.

Comradely yours,

Freddie Forster

of 1/15

8985

COPY

Oct. 30, 1946

PC,
WP

Dear Comrades:

This is not a news story. The same subject has been the topic of letters from me to the PC for over three years. I did think that when the PC had finally been moved to approve the publication of my political conclusions to the statistical study on the Russian economy published in the NI Dec. 1942 that it would finally be possible to write "finis" to my constant complaints about the PC's non-serious attitude to a very serious study. But it turns out otherwise.

Com. Erber has just informed me that, despite the Editorial Board's decision that my article appear in the November issue of the NI, this would not be done due to technical difficulties. Perhaps. But I wish to call the PC's attention to the following facts: (1) the article was handed in sufficiently in advance of deadline; (2) the Managing Editor, knowing that the LA has priority, should have handed in the material to set in type so as not to conflict with the LA; and (3) the state that it was impossible to have waited for the printer to set the article since that would have meant a week's delay in the issuance of the NI seems, to say the least, weak. Even under these circumstances the Nov. issue would have come out by the middle of the month. That would have been ahead of the scheduled appearance of many an issue.

The lack of Bolshevik ~~and~~ scrupulousness in the handling of an opponent's point of view is indeed deplorable, particularly at a time when (1) two separate Party conventions had voted to continue discussion on the Russian question in the press; and (2) our press has published opposing viewpoints by non-Party members yet has seen fit to keep my views out of print.

I ask that the PC acts promptly and sees that the article gets into the current NI. I also request that this letter be sent out to all NC members and alternates.

Comradely yours ,

F. Forest

8986