

To All NC Members:

April 27, 1944

Dear Comrades:

In the current issue of the IA and the NI there is an article on the latest events in Italy, signed by me. I was instructed by the PC to write it and upon the presentation of the draft to the Committee it was adopted unanimously. I should add that Comrade Johnson, who is on a leave of absence for several months, was not present and consequently cannot be considered as having voted for it.

You will note from the article that we have now endorsed the slogan of a national constituent assembly in Italy. You will notice previously that the slogan has already been raised by our comrades in Italy as part of their revolutionary democratic demands. Formally, we did not take a position on this slogan in our resolution on the national and colonial questions, or in the supplement to it which was devoted in large part to the situation in Italy. Its adoption by the PC now is not, as all the members agreed, in conflict with our convention resolution. As a matter of fact, it is in harmony with it. We had demanded the "right to vote" for the Italian people. Under the circumstances, in Italy today, this demand lacks the concreteness which the demand for a national constituent assembly gives it, that is, an assembly for whose members the people shall have the right to vote. The revolutionary power of this slogan is emphasized by the most recent development, namely, the formation of the Badoglio-Sforza-Ercoli Cabinet. This cabinet, like its predecessors, promises the people the right to vote and a national assembly to vote for -- but only in the future. They do not want the intervention of the masses, which they rightly fear. The slogan of a national constituent assembly to be convened immediately for the purpose of deciding the government of the country is admirably suited for mobilizing and centralizing the masses in a revolutionary struggle against these semi-Bonapartist usurpers who seek to impose themselves upon the people as their government. In raising this slogan, as you can see from the way it is done both by the Italian comrades and by us in the press, we do not counterpose it to the call for the organization of workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils. At the present time, the struggle for each is in harmony with the struggle for the other. We are emphatically in favor of a democratically elected national assembly as against the arbitrarily established pseudo-government of a handful of individual politicians. If the slogan of councils catches on among the masses and they begin to establish them, it is possible that the call for a constituent assembly and the organization of elections to it might come from these councils themselves. However, this is a question of tomorrow. For today, in any case, the best interests of the revolution and of mobilizing the masses in a struggle against the imperialist pseudo-democrats are served by amplifying the democratic section of our program in Italy by calling for a national constituent assembly.

This circular is addressed to all the members of the Committee out of town for the purpose of putting them on the decision of the PC. I hope that the out-of-town members will see eye to eye with us on this question and send in their votes accordingly. Should contrary votes be cast and motivated, the members of the committee will be informed accordingly.

With best party greetings,

Max Shachtman