

# The Draft Program of the Comintern

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE

The Chinese bourgeoisie is sufficiently realistic and knows closely enough the nature of world imperialism to understand that a real serious struggle against it requires such an upheaval of the revolutionary masses which would first of all become a menace for the bourgeoisie itself. It is the struggle against the Manchu Dynasty was a task of smaller historical importance than the overthrow of czarism, the struggle against world imperialism is a task on a much larger scale. And if we taught the workers of Russia from the very beginning not to believe in the readiness of liberalism and the ability of petty bourgeois democracy to overthrow czarism and to destroy feudalism, we should in a no less degree, have imbued the Chinese workers with the same spirit of distrust. The new, absolutely false, theory promulgated by Stalin and Bucharin about the "imminent" revolutionary character of the colonial bourgeoisie is, in substance, a translation of Menshevism into the language of Chinese politics, it serves only to make, on the basis of the oppressed position of China an internal political allowance for the Chinese bourgeoisie and to throw on its scale another weight against the weights of the trebly oppressed Chinese proletariat.

But, say the authors of the draft program, Stalin and Bucharin, Chiang Kai-shek's northern campaign roused a powerful movement among the workers and peasants. Of this there is no doubt. But did not the fact that Gutchkov and Shulglin brought to Petrograd Nicholas II's abdication play a revolutionary role? Did it not arouse the most downtrodden and scared section of people? Did not the fact that Kerensky, who but yesterday was a Laborite, became the President of the Ministers Council and the Commander-in-Chief, rouse the masses of soldiers? Did it not bring them to meetings, did it not rouse to its feet the village against the landlord? The question could be raised even more widely. Did not all workings of capitalism rouse the masses, did it not snatch them, to use the expression of the Communist Manifesto, out of the idleness of rural life? Did it not move the proletarian battalions to the struggle? Does our historical evaluation of the role of capitalism as a whole or the various actions of the bourgeoisie stop our active class revolutionary attitude to capitalism or to the actions of the bourgeoisie? Opportunism was always based on this kind of non-dialectical conservative Khvostist "objectivism." Marxism on the contrary invariably taught that the revolutionary results of one of another act of the bourgeoisie to which it is forced by its position will be fuller, more decisive, less doubtful and firmer, the more independent the proletarian vanguard will be in relation to the bourgeoisie, the less it will trust the bourgeoisie, the less it will be inclined to play into the hands of the bourgeoisie, to see it in bright colors, to overestimate its revolutionary nature or its readiness for a united front or for a struggle against imperialism.

Neither theoretically nor historically nor politically can Bucharin's appraisal of the colonial bourgeoisie stand criticism. However, this is exactly the appraisal, as we have seen, the draft resolution is seeking to lay down.

One uncondemned error always leads to another or prepares the ground for it.

If yesterday the Chinese bourgeoisie was included in the one revolutionary front, today it is declared to have "definitely gone over to the counter-revolutionary camp." It is not difficult to find how unfounded are these transpositions and inclusions which have been effected in a purely administrative way, without a more or less serious Marxist analysis.

It is absolutely clear that the bourgeoisie in joining the revolution does so not accidentally, not owing to light-mindedness, but under the pressure of its class interests. For fear of the masses the bourgeoisie later deserts the revolution or openly displays its secret hatred for the revolution. But to go over "definitely" to the counter-revolutionary camp, that is, to free itself from the necessity to "support" again the revolution or at least to flirt with it, this the bourgeoisie can do only in the event that, whether in a revolutionary or in any other way (for instance the Bismarkian way), its main class requirements are satisfied. We will recall the history of the period of 1848-1871. We will recall that the Russian bourgeoisie received an opportunity to turn its back so openly to the

## A CRITICISM OF FUNDAMENTALS

### By L. D. TROTSKY

revolution of 1905 only because it received from the revolution the State Duma, that it, it received an opportunity to bring direct pressure to bear on the bureaucracy and to compromise with it. But when the war of 1914-1917 revealed the inability of the "new" regime to secure the basic interest of the bourgeoisie, the latter again turned towards the revolution and became more radical even than in 1905.

Can it be considered that the revolution of 1925-27 in China has at least partly satisfied the basic interests of Chinese capitalism? No, China is now just as far from national unity and from customs independence as it was prior to 1925. But as a matter of fact the creation of one home market and its protection from cheaper foreign goods is for the Chinese bourgeoisie a question of life and death. It is a question only second in importance to that of maintaining the basis of its class domination over the proletariat and the rural poor. But also for the Japanese and for the British bourgeoisie the maintenance of China in its colonial state is a question of no less importance than the question of economic independence is for the Chinese bourgeoisie. That is why the Chinese bourgeoisie will still display many zig-zag moves towards the left in its future policy. For those who like united fronts there will still be many chances in the future. To tell the Chinese Communists today that their alliance with the bourgeoisie during the period of 1924-1927 was correct but that now it is no good because the bourgeoisie has definitely gone over to the counter-revolutionary camp, means to disarm the Chinese Communists once again in face of the coming objective changes in the situation and the inevitable zig-zags of the Chinese bourgeoisie towards the left. The war now conducted by Chiang Kai-shek fully disproves the mechanical scheme of the authors of the draft program.

But, if you please, the fundamental error of the official formulation of the question will appear more glaringly, more convincingly, and more definitely if we will remember the fact which is still fresh in our minds, and is of no little importance, namely, that czarist Russia was a combination of oppressed and oppressor nations, that is, it consisted of Great Russians and other nationalities, many of whom lived entirely in a colonial or semi-colonial state. Lenin did not only insist on the greatest attention to the national problem of the nationalities of czarist Russia, but even proclaimed—against Bucharin and others—the elementary duty of the proletariat of the dominant nation to be the support of the struggle of the oppressed nations for their self-determination, even to the extent of separation. But did the Party conclude from this that the bourgeoisie of the nationalities oppressed by czarism—the Poles, Ukrainians, Tartars, Jews, Armenians and others—were more pro-

gressive, more revolutionary than the Russian bourgeoisie? Historical experience bears out the fact that the Polish bourgeoisie,—notwithstanding the fact that it suffered from the yoke of the autocracy and national oppression, was more reactionary than the Russian bourgeoisie and, in the State Dumas, was always inclined, not towards the Cadets (liberals) but towards the Octobrists (reactionaries). The same is true concerning the Tartar bourgeoisie. The fact that the Jews had absolutely no rights whatever did not prevent the Jewish bourgeoisie from being more cowardly, more reactionary, and more vile than the Russian bourgeoisie. Or perhaps the Estonian bourgeoisie, the Lettish, the Georgian, or the Armenian bourgeoisie were more revolutionary than the Great Russian bourgeoisie? How can one forget such historical lessons?

Or perhaps now, post factum, we should declare that Bolshevism was wrong when—in contradistinction to the Bund, the Dashnaks, the P.P.S., the Georgian and other Mensheviks—it called upon the workers of ALL oppressed nationalities, of all colonial peoples of czarist Russia, at the very dawn of the bourgeois democratic revolution, to dissociate themselves from the other classes and form their independent class organizations, to break ruthlessly all organizational ties not only with the liberal bourgeoisie, but also with the revolutionary petty-bourgeois parties, to win over the working class in the struggle against those parties, and to fight against them with the help of the workers, for influence over the peasantry? Was it not a "Trotskyist" mistake, did we not skip over, in relation to the oppressed, including the extremely backward nations, the Kuomintang phase of development? How easy it is after all to say that the P.P.S., the Dashnaks, the Tsutun, the Bund and others were "peculiar" forms of necessary collaboration of the various classes in the struggle against the autocracy and against national oppression. Can such historical lessons be forgotten?

For a Marxian it was clear even prior to the Chinese events of the last three years—now it should become clear even to the blind—that foreign imperialism as a direct factor in the internal life of China, renders the Chinese Mifukovs and Chinese Kerenskys in the final analysis even more vile than their Russian prototypes. It is not in vain that the very first manifesto of our Party proclaimed that the further east we go the lower and more vile become the bourgeoisie, the greater become the tasks of the proletariat. This historical law fully applies also to China.

"Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution, THEREFORE the workers must support the bourgeoisie—this is what the bankrupt politicians of the liquidator camp say. Our revolution is a bourgeois revolution is what we Marxians say. THEREFORE the workers must open the eyes of the people to the treachery of the bourgeois politicians, teach them not to believe them and to rely on their OWN forces, on their OWN organizations, on their OWN unification, and on their OWN arms alone." (Lenin, Vol. 14, part 1, Page 11).

This Lenin thesis is obligatory for the whole of the East and must by all means find a place in the program of the Comintern.

TO BE CONTINUED

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# Platform of the Communist Opposition

CONCLUDED FROM LAST ISSUE

## The Party Organization

The organization of the Party, in the Party units and in the trade union and language fractions, represents today a state of chaos and demoralization. The execution of the reorganization and the functioning of the Party from top to bottom since that period have brought confusion, inaction and indifference into the Party ranks.

The basis of Party organization today is the shop nucleus and the street nucleus (international branch). This is correct. The organization of street nuclei (international branches), where shop nuclei cannot be organized, had as its purpose an accelerated political development and general activity on the part of all members. The former language branches formally were liquidated in order that the foreign-speaking member might be brought into the sphere of general American labor and political activity and Party life and get away from the narrow existence of his national grouping.

But what do we find actually? The street nuclei or international branches, are for the most part non-functioning bodies in a political sense. Organizationally, there is the anomaly that three, four or five street nuclei, with 20 or more members each on the record book, will meet in the same room or hall at the same hour, often mixing or combining their work. (New York district). Presumably the street nucleus is organized on the territorial (living area) basis of the members. Generally throughout the Party the street nuclei are formally organized in that manner. Actually the street nucleus (international branch) loosens this practice and membership becomes general regardless of residence. This, however, is not the main defect. The defects are so outstanding, and known to any member who wants to see, that it is but necessary to mention them in general outline form. The functions conducted by the street nuclei are mockeries of working class activity and political life. It is common practice that the Party members at their unit meetings find themselves confronted with an orgy of ticket-selling, money-collecting and similar technical activities, till they feel that they are petty salesmen and agents instead of active Communists concerning themselves with the vital issues of the working class. Bureaucratism is rampant, the functions of political activity, discussion and decision are usurped by the committees and officials.

It is necessary that the Party organization be overhauled. Shop nuclei must be formed in such places where there are sufficient members working to make it possible for the nucleus to function actively (issuance of a shop paper; organization of the unorganized, etc.).

The street nuclei (international branches) must be constituted on a genuine territorial basis and have a membership of not less than 25 or more than 50. The Party shall emphasize the character of work of the nucleus. Namely, that the units shall concern themselves with political and labor problems (discussion and action on shop problems, trade union questions, parliamentary activity, strikes, etc.). All technical work, such as payment of dues, other financial collections, etc. shall be placed as a subsidiary part of the agenda and conducted at specific periods only, and in such a manner as in no way to interfere with the main tasks.

The general vitalization of Party life for each member is essential. Each member must feel himself as a factor and contributor to the life and needs of the Party. The practice of thinking and administering from above, without real consultation and participation by the membership, must give way to the opportunity for each member to contribute his ideas. Mere orders are not sufficient to produce healthy Party life and participation in the class struggle. Thought from the membership is a prerequisite. The membership must have the opportunity through more frequent membership meetings (on a city or section scale, depending upon the size of the membership) to take up the major issues and campaigns of the Party in order that they may thoroughly understand the Party's objective and better be able to carry out its aims. The practice which has made the meetings of functionaries (officials) almost the main and the only medium of discussion must be liquidated. Such practices are breeding grounds for

bureaucracy, for separation of the rank and file members from the officialdom, but high and low. More frequent membership meetings will make it possible for the rank and file worker to contribute his views and to check the functionary; at the same time the officials thereby can obtain a clearer picture of the actual views of the membership, the resources and capacities of the Party, and the Party work can thus be better carried out. All organizations, and the Party organization too, tend to develop always a certain inertness and tradition that conservatize. These tendencies must be guarded against by a continuous re-invigoration from below.

## TRADE UNION FRACTIONS

The trade union fractions of the Party, where they are not utterly liquidated, are lifeless, functioning usually only in time of union elections. In a large measure this is due to the virtual liquidation of the work in the existing trade unions and the wrong line being developed in the Party in this respect. Functioning trade union fractions in every trade and industry, in each local union, district council, etc., are absolutely essential for the extension of Party influence in the trade unions. Lifeless or non-functioning trade union fractions foster the development of a non-critical attitude toward so-called progressives and left wingers in the labor movement, of an easy-going opportunism and adaptability on the one hand and completely "Leftist" or sectarian attitude on the other. The latter tends to confine activity in the trade unions and among the unorganized to the Communists alone.

The trade union fractions must be organized and brought to life in the unions. The T.U.E.L. must become a genuine organization and not remain just a Communist body. The Party center must put this work in the foreground, and work out also for each industry a concrete program around which and through which the fractions may be vitalized and become the real instruments of the trade union work.

## Agrarian Work

The severe crisis in agriculture, with all its sharp consequences for the masses of poor farmers and farm wage workers, has not been entirely overcome by American capitalism. It has remained one of the chief sources of weakness in the armor of the American bourgeoisie, and a broad field for agitation and organization for the Communist movement which has not been taken advantage of except to an insignificant extent.

The Party has indeed, followed a consistently opportunist line in this field of work, having gone so far as to give virtual endorsement to the hypocritical McNary-Haugen Bill and other bourgeois "remedies." It has further failed to separate the various strata of the agricultural population from each other, and has therefore not succeeded in approaching any of them properly. The farmers have been looked on "as a mass" solely as objects for maneuvering in Farmer-Labor Party movements. It is necessary to change the course of the Party in this respect.

The first step the Party must take is to obtain contact with the agricultural wage workers, the proletarians on the farm. It is the primary duty of the Party to carry on this work, and especially to have a correct approach to the syndicalist workers (the I.W.W.) who have been the only organizing force in this field up till now.

The ranks of the Party must be open to only those farmers who accept the proletarian viewpoint on property. It must concentrate its chief efforts among the farmers upon organizing the tenant and heavily-mortgaged farmers who feel the heavy oppression of the bankers, railroads, mill-owners, and big farmers. A guarantee for the proper functioning of the movement of the poor farmers, that they will remain on the correct path of struggle instead of succumbing to the pressure of the big farmers, is that the proletarians and semi-proletarians on the land shall have the preponderance of leadership in the movement.

The Negro tenant farmers, share croppers, and those who are slaving under a system of virtual peonage in the South, must receive the special attention of the Party. It is possible to organize them: this has been demonstrated in the past by the fact that organizations of the Negro poor farmers have arisen spontaneously in the South.

It is possible to unite them with the poor white farmers: this has also been demonstrated by past experiences even in the reactionary South, where, in Texas for example, strong organizations of Negro and white poor and tenant farmers existed and functioned effectively for some time.

## Young Workers League

The situation in the Young Workers (Communist) League merits the deepest attention of the entire movement. The leadership and line of the League have merely been a miniature replica of the factional and corrupt Party regime. The evils of the Lovestone-Pepper leadership in the Party have appeared in an even more grotesque form in the Zam-Herberg (Lovestone) leadership in the League. Rampant factionalism, petty-bourgeois cynicism and super-sophistication, occupation with "high" politics, are corrupting the League like so many diseases. The League has become nothing more nor less than a faction agency for the Lovestone regime. Instead of the League being in the forefront of the struggle against opportunism in the Party, it is always ready to endorse it unconditionally.

In every struggle where splendid opportunities for growth were presented, the League failed signally to take advantage of them. In the face of the growing exploitation of the working youth and the possibilities for the development of struggle, the League has either lost membership or stood still. There is an increase in the mood of passivity among the League members, and the inner life of the League becomes constantly more barren and withered. The leadership of the League has been a dead hand on the organization.

A symbol of the situation is the fact that the founders of the Communist youth movement in this country, and its leadership at the period of its swiftest and healthiest development (Abern, Carlson, Edwards, Shachtman, etc.) have now been expelled. In their stead have been placed a leadership which cannot have the confidence of the mass of the membership or the young workers, which has brought only disintegration, factionalism and degeneration into the League. Instead of helping to turn out this leadership, and replacing it with a sound proletarian core which alone is able to solve the difficulties with which the League is presently confronted, the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International has followed a course which has in actuality resulted in the entrenchment of the Zam-Lovestone leadership in the League. The same course has been followed by the Party leadership in its relationship to the Youth.

The League (and even the Pioneers!) is at present being mobilized against so-called "Trotskyism," that is, against the fundamental tenets of Leninism. Instead of the Communist Youth being permitted to develop freely their natural inclinations against opportunism and revisionism, they are herded into blind support for the liquidation of the basic teachings of Bolshevism. The main task of the League members is to fight relentlessly for the line of revolutionary principles now being defended by the Leninist Opposition. An additional prerequisite is the eradication of all corrupt petty-bourgeois tendencies in the League, of opportunism following in the path of the Party faction regime, of "smart-Aleckism," cynicism and playing with the working class movement.

## PHILADELPHIA MEETING

James P. Cannon will speak in Philadelphia on Sunday, March 17 at 7:30 P. M. at the Friendship Liberal League Forum, Clayton Hall, 9th St., and Girard Ave. The subject of the lecture will be "The Truth about Trotsky and the Platform of the Russian Opposition."

## CANNON MEETINGS IN BOSTON

Friday, March 22, Chelsea, Mass., Chelsea Labor Lyceum.  
Saturday, March 23, Boston, Mass., at Militant "Vetcherinka".

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By L. D. TROTSKY

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