

The MILITANT

Semi-Monthly Organ of the Opposition Group in the Communist Party of America

"It is necessary that every member of the Party should study calmly and with the greatest objectivity, first the substance of the differences of opinion, and then the development of the struggles within the Party. Neither the one nor the other can be done unless the documents of both sides are published. He who takes somebody's word for it is a hopeless idiot, who can be disposed of with a simple gesture of the hand."—Lenin

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TROTSKY'S REPLY TO STALIN

To the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union!

To the Executive Committee of the Communist International!

Today, December 16th, the representative of the Council of the G.P.U. Volinsky, transmitted the following ultimatum to me orally:

"The work of your own colleagues in the country—he declared almost literally—has lately assumed an open counter-revolutionary character. The conditions under which you live in Alma Ata give you full possibilities to direct this work. On this ground the Council of the G. P. U. has decided to demand of you the categorical promise to discontinue this work, or else the Council will be obliged to change your conditions of existence in the sense of a complete isolation from political life. In connection with this the question of changing your place of residence is also raised."

I declared to the representative of the G. P. U., that I would only give him a written answer to a written formulation. My refusal to give an oral reply to the G. P. U. was called forth by experiences of previous times; my words would be maliciously distorted in order to mislead the working masses of the U. S. S. R. and the whole world.

Nevertheless, irrespective of the further steps to be undertaken by the G. P. U., which after all carries no independent role in this matter but only prays out technically the old decision of the narrow Stalin faction which I have known for some time, I consider it necessary to submit the following to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Executive Committee of the Comintern:

To demand that I renounce my political activity is to demand that I abjure the struggle for the interests of the international proletariat, a struggle I have been conducting without interruption for thirty-two years, that is, during my whole conscious life. The attempt to represent this activity of mine as "counter-revolutionary" emanates from those whom I accuse before the international proletariat of trampling under foot the basic teachings of Marx and Lenin, of injuring the historical interests of the world revolution, of breaking with the traditions and the heritage of the October, of the unconscious—and therefore the more dangerous—preparation for the Thermidor.

To renounce political activity would mean to give up the struggle against the blindness of the present leadership which heaps upon the objective difficulties of socialist construction ever greater political difficulties that arise out of the opportunist incapacity to conduct a proletarian policy on a large historical scale.

It would mean the renunciation of the struggle against the stifling regime in the Party which reflects the growing pressure of the enemy classes upon the proletarian vanguard.

It would mean to be passively reconciled to the economic policy of opportunism, a policy which undermines and destroys the foundations of the proletarian dictatorship, which hampers the material and cultural growth of this dictatorship and at the same time deals heavy blows at the alliance of the workers and the working peasants, the basis of the Soviet power.

The renunciation of political activity would mean to cover with silence the disastrous policy of the International leadership which, in Germany, 1923, led to the surrender of great revolutionary positions without a struggle; a policy which attempted to cover up its opportunistic mistakes with the adventures in Estonia and Bulgaria; which falsely estimated the international situation at the Fifth Congress and gave the Parties directives which only weakened and split them, a policy which, through the Anglo-Russian Committee, supported the British General Council, the bulwark of imperialist reaction, in the most difficult months for the traitorous reformists; which in Poland, at the sharp internal turning point, trans-

formed the vanguard of the proletariat into a rear-guard of Pilsudski; which in China carried out to the end the historical line of Menshevism and thereby helped the bourgeoisie to demolish, to bleed and to behead the revolutionary proletariat; which weakened the Comintern everywhere and squandered its ideological capital.

To cease political activity would mean to submit passively to the blunting and the direct falsification of our most important weapon: the Marxist method, and the strategical lessons we acquired

Comrade Trotsky to the American Opposition

We are able to announce that the Communist Opposition in the United States has finally succeeded in getting into direct connection with comrade L. D. Trotsky, who is now living in exile in Pera, the foreign quarter of Constantinople! We have just received a letter written by comrade Trotsky to the United States stating that he has largely overcome his malarial affliction, is in fairly good health and has not the slightest intention of dying despite the ardent wishes of the enemies of Bolshevism. In a very early issue we expect to present to our readers a message from comrade Trotsky to the American Communists. We are further assured of regular contributions from comrade Trotsky to the Militant and we intend to publish a new article by him in every issue of our paper.

Long life to comrade Trotsky, the living leader of world Bolshevism!

in struggle under the leadership of Lenin and with the aid of this method.

It would mean to be reconciled passively—by bearing the responsibility for them—to the theory of the Kulak's growing into Socialism, to the myth about the revolutionary mission of the colonial bourgeoisie, to the slogan of the "combined workers' and peasants' parties" for the East, a slogan which breaks with the foundations of class theory, and finally to that which is the crowning point of all these reactionary fables and many others, the theory of socialism in a single country, the greatest crime against revolutionary internationalism.

The Leninist wing of the Party has endured blows since 1923, that is, since the unprecedented defeat of the German revolution. The force of these blows has increased with every successive defeat of the international and the Russian proletariat as a result of the opportunist leadership.

Theoretical understanding and political experience teach us that a period of retreat, of retrogression, that is, of reaction, can take place not only after bourgeois revolutions, but also after proletarian revolutions. For six years we have lived in the U.S.S.R. under conditions of growing reaction against the October, and with it the clearing of the road for the Thermidor. The most open and consummate expression of this reaction within the Party is the wild persecution and the organized smashing of the Left wing.

In its last attempts to resist the open Thermidorians, the Stalin faction had to borrow the "rubbish" and the "remnants" of the ideas of the Opposition. Creatively, it is impotent. The struggle against the Left deprives it of all firmness. Its practical policy is unbalanced, false, contradictory and unworthy of confidence.

The campaign against the Right Danger, undertaken with such clamor, remains three-quarters only a sham campaign and serves above all to cover up the real war of annihilation against the Bolshevik-Leninists before the masses. The world bourgeoisie and international menshevism have both blessed this war: these judges have long ago

awarded the "historical right" to Stalin.

If this blind, cowardly, incompetent policy of adaptation to the bureaucracy and the petty bourgeoisie had not been followed, the situation of the working masses in the twelfth year of the dictatorship would be far more favorable; the military defense far firmer and more trustworthy; the Comintern would be in quite a different position and would not have to retreat step by step before the traitorous and bribed social democracy.

The incurable weakness of this apparatus reaction in the Party, despite all its apparent power, lies in the fact that it does not know what it is doing. It is carrying out the command of the enemy classes. There can be no greater historical curse for a faction that arose out of the Revolution and is now undermining it.

The great historical strength of the Opposition, despite its momentary weakness, lies in the fact that it feels the pulse of world historical processes, that it clearly perceives the dynamics of class forces, that it foresees the future and prepares for it consciously. To renounce political activity would be to renounce the preparations for the coming day.

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The threat to change my conditions of existence and to isolate me from political activity sounds as though I am not separated by 2500 miles from Moscow and by 150 miles from the nearest railroad and by approximately the same distance from the border of the desolate Western provinces of China, where the fiercest malaria shares its dominion with leprosy and pestilence. As though the Stalin faction, whose direct organ is the G. P. U., had not done everything in its power to isolate me not only from political life, but from any other form of life as well. The Moscow newspapers arrive here only after a delay of ten days to a month, sometimes more. Letters get to me only in exceptional cases, after they have lain around for two or three months in the drawers of the G. P. U. and the Secretariat of the Central Committee.

Two of my closest co-workers since the civil war, comrades Sermouks and Posnansky, who accompanied me voluntarily to my place of exile, were arrested immediately upon their arrival, thrown into a cellar with common criminals, and then sent away to the remotest corners of the North. A letter from my hopelessly sick daughter, whom you expelled from the Party and kept from all work, took seventy-three days to get to me from the hospital, so that my answer found her no longer alive. Another letter on the serious illness of my second daughter, whom you also expelled from the Party and drove from all work, I received a month ago from Moscow, forty-three days after it was mailed. Telegraphic inquiries about health hardly ever reach their destination. In a similar or far worse position are thousands of the best Bolshevik-Leninists, whose services to the October revolution and to the international proletariat are infinitely greater than the services of those who exiled or imprisoned them.

In preparing still more cruel repressions against the Opposition, the narrow faction of Stalin, whom Lenin characterized in his "Testament" as rude and disloyal, (at a time when these characteristics had not yet reached a one-hundredth part of their present development), is attempting with the help of the G. P. U. to lay at the door of the Opposition some kind of "connection" with the enemies of the dictatorship. Among themselves the present leaders say: "We have to do this for the masses." And very often even more cynically: "That is for the simpletons." My close co-worker, Georgi Vassilievitch Butov, secretary of the Revolutionary War Council during all the years of the civil war, was arrested and detained under unheard of conditions. From this upright and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3