

# Throughout the World of Labor

## The Split Danger in the French C. G. T. U.

The battle that took place at the last congress of the C. G. T. U.\* involved an inevitable sequel. Only a few weeks have passed and already it is clear what it must end in. In the Parisian trade unions, the struggle between the *minoritaires* and *majoritaires* is intense, the latter contesting the most certain votes, demanding extraordinary conventions, and when they are defeated, sounding the call for factions—but without much success. The turmoil is complete and the restlessness lively. The struggle is taking place between the most active and earnest elements; most frequently it passes above the masses of trade unionists who stay at home discouraged. What will happen in January when union cards are renewed? How many will remain members of the C. G. T. U.?

The splits is in the air. At first it was merely talked about. Now it is beginning to enter into reality. A few isolated cases. But that is how things begin. One has never seen trade union splitters saying frankly that they want the split—except for a few ultra-Leftists who understand nothing of the trade union movement and imagine that it is easy to create new trade unions and even a new confederation. The tactic of the *majoritaires* is everywhere the same: it consists primarily in maneuvering adroitly so as to throw the responsibility for the split back upon the *minoritaires*. French experience is quite recent and it must look back upon it at the moment when history seems compelled to begin all over again.

Jouhaux never declared openly that the split was necessary and that he was going to carry it out. Quite the contrary. He did not cease repeating that it was Moscow that wanted it, even when he capped his maneuver by having the first expulsions executed. He did not precipitate the operation until the minority became so strong that the normal course of trade union democracy would have sufficed to drive him from leadership.

He had no lack of advisors—strange to the trade union movement—to push him onto the road of split. They even found that he was delaying too long and sermonized him publicly, asking whether he would foolishly allow the leadership to be taken away from him.

The leaders of the C. G. T. U. are in a similar position. Even though the votes of the confederal congress appear to leave them a wide margin and consequently permit them to wait not to press events needlessly they know well enough that this position is insecure and may change very rapidly. In the present organization, they no longer have a solid basis. They know that there are still many "panic-mongers" among those who voted for them at the congress and that as a result they run the risk of seeing their majority give away abruptly. The trade unions are not the party—something they have completely forgotten—and a leadership that practises a supposedly revolutionary gymnastic which is only incoherence, stupidity and incompetence, cannot be imposed from above for long, for each trade unionist measures the consequences of it. A Communist nucleus can be a fiction and exist only on paper—there are more than one of them—but in a trade union there must be members, and when it is deprived of them, it is not easy to rebuild it.

Besides, the Confederation leaders have seen what happened in Czecho-Slovakia not so long ago, where, all of a sudden, the minority found itself the majority and turned the leadership out of doors.

Also, events are proceeding with an accelerated rhythm. Where three years were necessarily in Jouhaux's time, not even three months are needed now. The Confederal congress was held the middle of September. At the beginning of December, the decisive move is already begun. There are sharp conflicts, actual splits. At Tour-

\*Confederation Generale du Travail, the Left Wing trade union federation under leadership and control of the Communist Party, against whose mechanical, arbitrary and erroneous policies a growing minority has rebelled.—Ed.

coing, two unions are cut off from their federations which have established new organizations against them. It is around them that the struggle will be concentrated.

From the day after the confederal congress, we pointed out the intention of the confederal leadership to split. Comrades reproached us for it. They did not believe it themselves and told us: "Why speak so soon about a split?" Experience shows how difficult it is to defend oneself in such a case and how the majority triumphs precisely because it alone knows well what it wants, because it takes the offensive and systematically conducts the fight to attain its aim. By constant provocation it seeks to drive the *minoritaires* into blind alleys, it pushes them to commit mistakes which it thereupon does not fail to exploit to the full.

The defence against the trade union directing center's intention to split demands above all an exact policy which alone makes it possible to pursue the battle as a whole. It is possible that for some trade unions life is possible, for a time, only in autonomy. The minority must be able to judge. It must be able to decide the necessary retreats, to give up, for example, trade union leadership, when the forces are substantially equal and there are always a thousand ways to contest a vote, rather than to sanction a partial split. We know what weight the position of the railwaymen had at the time of the time of the first split; the break among them was made precisely under these conditions. But all this is impossible unless the minority is given a solid basis at the outset.

We are convinced that the minority has weakened itself by the position it has taken; it has shown itself primarily anxious about numbers, as was demonstrated by its publicly affirmed solidarity with the "six" municipal councillors of Paris, a strange political action on the part of men who make use of the name of revolutionary syndicalism. But whatever may be the mistakes committed by the minority and those it will be led to commit tomorrow it would none the less hold true that the responsibility for the split would devolve entirely upon the confederal leadership and that it would be the result of the incoherent and pernicious policy of the last few years. That there should be "Right wingers" in a trade union organization, even of the type of the C. G. T. U., is inevitable; a trade union is not the party and even the Communist parties find it hard enough to eliminate their Right wingers. The right policy for the C. G. T. U. consists precisely in educating and winning progressively the timorous and too-prudent elements, and to increase constantly the number of trade unionists fully conscious of the revolutionary task they must accomplish. Its present leaders have believed that they can lead the trade unions as they lead the party. The resistance did not take long in making itself felt, and in order to save themselves, they now want to break up the C. G. T. U. But that is what they must be prevented from doing.

—A. ROSMER.

Paris, December 13, 1929.

## New Turn in German Trade Union Tactics

The convention of the revolutionary trade union opposition met in Berlin on November 30 and December 1.

This convention, which the German Communist Party prepared for many months, had at the beginning, a very specific aim. It was that of creating in Germany a sort of minority movement in the trade unions, of reuniting into a red bloc the opposition existing in the various organizations and thus to establish the first conditions for the creation of new trade unions in Germany.

But in the course of the preparations

\*Leaders of the French Right wing, led by Louis Sellier, who recently quit the Communist Party and ranks of Communism.—Ed.

for the convention, a series of experiences showed the German C. P. the contrast that existed between its theses on "the radicalization of the masses" and the reality.

A series of strikes led by the party and the revolutionary trade union opposition remained isolated and were concluded with heavy defeats. The hope of arousing a chain of solidarity strikes by simply starting strikes at certain points, collapsed lamentably, and had to collapse because—without even considering all the tactical errors committed—the radicalization had not attained, in the German proletariat, the degree that presupposes the leadership of the party.

The leadership was incapable of drawing this lesson from the experiences of recent months but it nevertheless had to recognize that experiences such as that of the pipe-layers do not strengthen the influence of the party on the masses, but on the contrary reduce this influence substantially. It should then have had to adopt a different policy at the convention of the revolutionary trade union opposition, which ought to be the beginning of the elimination of new organizations; but the leadership maintained its estimate of the situation and its false evaluation of the processes of regroupment in the masses; in this way it only increased the prevailing confusion.


There were 1122 delegates at the convention, of whom 27 were from enterprises employing from three to ten thousand workers, and 25 delegates from big factories of more than ten thousand workers. But the great majority of the delegates had not been elected by genuine workers' meetings but merely chosen in small meetings of the opposition where, in most of the instances, only a fraction of the workers in the factory were present. It is therefore a great exaggeration to say that these delegates represented two million workers.

Nevertheless, the convention although entirely dominated by the party, could have marked the beginning of a broad front of proletarian defense against the serious offensive of capital, on the condition that the situation were correctly estimated. The principal report was made by the famous trade union strategist, Merker, member of the Central Committee of the C. P. G. He duly outlined the progress of rationalization, the brutal offensive of the bosses but he had nothing to say of "the revolutionary wave", of the powerful proletarian counter-offensive, of the "storming battles" of the working class that the Wedding Congress of the Party still announced in June. The delegates had still less to say about it. Their speeches indicated a profound fury against the reformists, the terrible consequences of the brutal employers' dictatorship, they showed everything save the impetuous drive of the masses of which the leadership of the party speaks daily.

The attitude of the English delegate representing the Red International of Labor Unions who, at the beginning of the congress was not yet acquainted with the tactical reversal, proved very well how surprising was the sharp turn and consequently, how disconcerting; the new zig-zag of the Executive Committee of the Communist International came so brusquely as to thwart the plans of Losovsky who had first intended to come to the convention himself. Under these conditions, the turn that has just been acknowledged was not a renunciation of the false tactic of the C. I. and of the C. C. of the German Party. Added to the wrong estimate of the situation, which is not abandoned, pinned on a system of erroneous methods that prevent the mobilization of the masses, this reversal leaves the door open to any kind of an interpretation and to all adventurist and opportunist digressions.

Berlin, December, 1929

—KURT LANDAU

IN THE NEXT ISSUE  
  
 ROSA LUXEMBURG

## The 11th Congress of the British Communist Party

The British Communist Party held its XI Congress at Leeds. One might think that the debate would be rather animated, in view of the incidents that preceded its convocation. But there was nothing of the sort. It is true that the most important things took place behind the scenes and that the public part of the congress was very limited. The Right was of course denounced, but the Right wingers were not named. It is a peculiarity of the English party. The Right is always spoken of there as an abstraction; no one knows or rather no one wishes to say who represents it.

The chiefs of the party, who did not have a brilliant accounting to present, recognized their mistakes and delivered speeches in conformity with the orthodoxy of the day. Pollitt, who remains national enough, did not announce that England is at present before an immediately revolutionary situation; after having discoursed on the first, the second and the third period, he finished his speech as follows: "If we are asked whether this country must follow the example of Russia, we will reply without hesitation: Yes! It is only by the social revolution and armed insurrection that the workers can secure power."

The little palace revolutions that had agitated the summits of the party for the last few months were terminated by the return of Gallacher to the political bureau where he will again find Campbell, Horner, Pollitt, Bell and Cox who had kicked him out.

It is not, of course, the kind of a congress that could give the party a new spirit, and it is very significant to note that in a situation as favorable as the present—as a result of the general discontent provoked among the workers by the policy of the Laborite government—it does not succeed in growing. Even the bourgeois journals are not sparing in their rallery towards the British party and even the Communist International. One of them under the title "A Starving Credo", writes:

"Three years ago the British Communist Party boasted of having more than 10,000 members. It no longer has even a quarter of them today, and what remains is rent by internal dissension, personal and political. The final disaster, over which there was so much lament at Leeds, coincided with the new policy imposed by Moscow . . . It is really true that the Communist International stopped discoursing and discussing on the decline of capitalism and took note of the fact that what is really declining in the world is Communism.

These journals are burying Communism too soon. But it is certain that the incoherent policy of the Communist International has been disastrous to it. Now it discovers that what is needed is a daily paper. When one knows what an enormous enterprise a daily paper is here, the huge sums it requires, one is stupefied by this new folly. What is needed to bring the party out of its atrophy, is a deepgoing examination of the situation and the policy followed since 1925. But such an examination would show that if the British Communists have made mistakes, the ones principally responsible are not they but the leaders of the Communist International, and naturally this will not be done.

At a by-election held in Scotland, the Communists presented a candidate, Isobel Brown, who received 1,448 votes, the elected Laborite having 18,485 and the conservative 13,270. The figure of the Communist vote is relatively respectable if one considers that it was the first time the Communists faced the struggle in this district. However, it should be remembered that Scotland is now the "reddest" part of the United Kingdom and that in the other districts the Communist candidates in the general elections received far from similar votes. Nevertheless, the deposit of 150 pounds sterling (about \$730.00) was lost, the number of Communist voters being less than one-eighth of the votes cast. The new electoral tactic, which should be studied as a whole, thus remains pretty expensive.

—S. B.

London, December 10, 1929.