

The Defense of the Soviet Union and the Opposition

Continued from Last Issue

By L. D. Trotsky

But to this day I have been unable to find in the papers of the Leninbund any echo of the discussion in the organization. The editors of *Die Fahne des Kommunismus* made a one-sided selection of ultra-Leftist articles from foreign Opposition papers, making the ridiculous article of the "Korschist" sympathizer the basis for the discussion. The editors themselves stood on the side, waiting to find what would come out of it all. In spite of the exceptional acuteness with which the problem was posed, Urbahns lost week after week, limiting himself to reprinting foreign articles directed against the Marxist point of view. Only after my article, that is, six weeks after the beginning of the conflict in the Far East, did the editors of *Die Fahne* judge the moment opportune to express themselves. But even then they took their time. A short article divided into two parts. The political conclusions are again put off to the following week. Why? Perhaps to make room for Radek's calumniations against the Russian Opposition that appeared in the same number? Then what was the line of the Leninbund on the most important question of international policy in the course of those six weeks? No one knows.

That won't do. Such methods weaken the Leninbund and render the best service not only to Thaelmann but to Brandler.

For him who knows the history of the Russian Opposition, it is clear that Urbahns expresses in an embarrassed manner the very opinions that the Stalinists have so perfidiously and with such bad faith attributed to the Opposition. Dishonestly concealing our documents

from the workers, the Stalinists tirelessly repeated and printed it in tens of millions of copies, that the Opposition considers the October revolution lost, Thermidor accomplished, and that it is directing its course towards bourgeois democracy. It is beyond question of doubt that Stalin's successes in the organization were in no small measure assured by the incessant spreading of this lie. But how great must be the stupefaction, and with it also the indignation, of the Russian Opposition when they find in the publications of the Leninbund, in a concealed form, this friendly counsel: Take the road that Stalinists have so long attempted to foist upon you.

This question assumes an all the sharper character because there are little gentlemen among the ultra-Leftists who whisper in each other's ear: the Russian Opposition itself agrees that Thermidor is accomplished, only it does not say so out of "diplomatic" considerations. How far from a revolutionary position one must be to admit that among revolutionists there can exist for a single minute such execrable duplicity! Only one thing can be said: the poison of Zinovievism and Maslowist cynicism has left its traces in the ranks of the ultra-Leftists. The sooner the Opposition rids itself of such elements the better for it.

The program article we have analyzed, which seems to draw a balance of the "discussion", contains frequent allusions to the effect that on various questions Urbahns was right while all the others were wrong (declaration of the Russian Opposition on October 16, 1926; the question of

creating the Leninbund not as a faction but as an independent party with its own candidates; the question of the First of May and the First of August, 1929, etc.) I think it would have been better if the article had not raised these questions, for each one of them indicates a definite mistake by comrade Urbahns, which he has not yet understood. I will not speak at all of the thoroughly wrong position in 1923-26, when Urbahns together with Maslow and others supported the reaction in the Russian Communist Party and conducted an ultra-Left course in Germany. If necessary, I am ready to return to all these questions and to show that Urbahns' mistakes are all connected, that they are not accidental but come from a certain method of thinking which I cannot call Marxist. In practice, Urbahns' policy consists of vacillations between Korsch and Brandler, or rather in the mechanical combination of Korsch and Brandler.

The Danger of Sectarianism and National Limitedness

In this pamphlet are analyzed differences of opinion that can be designated as strategical. Compared to them, the differences that exist on internal German questions appear more as tactical differences, even though they can probably be traced back to two different lines. Nevertheless, these questions will have to be treated separately.

It is incontestable that the basis of the numerous errors of Urbahns in German policy lies in his wrong attitude towards the official Communist party. To consider the Communist Party—not its apparatus of functionaries, but its proletarian kernel and the masses that follow it—as a finished, dead and buried organization, is to fall into sectarianism. As a revolutionary faction, the Leninbund would have been in a position to play a great role. But it cut itself off from development by its pretensions, which are to say the least without foundation, to play the role of a second party.

With the ideological confusion of the Leninbund, its striving to become a "party" as swiftly as possible leads it to accept into its ranks elements that have long ago broken with Leninism and Bolshevism. In its anxiety not to lose these elements, the leadership of the Leninbund deliberately refrains from adopting a definite policy on a number of questions, which naturally only confuses and aggravates the situation by driving the disease deeper into the body.

There exist at the moment a good number of "Left" groups and grouplets that march on one and the same place; while guarding their independence, they accuse each other of not going far enough; they pride themselves on not being in one hundred percent agreement with each other; they publish little papers from time and find satisfaction in this illusory existence, without any ground under their feet, without a clear point of view and without perspectives. Feeling their weaknesses, these groups, or rather their directors, are above all afraid of falling under someone's "influence", or have to declare themselves in solidarity with someone—for what would become of that sweet independence contained in the 64 cubic meters required for an editorial chamber?

With that is connected yet another danger.

In the Communist International, the ideological leadership of the Russian party has long ago been replaced by the absolutism of the central apparatus and the dictatorship of the cash box. And while the Right opposition shows no less activity than the Left in its protests against the dictatorship of the apparatus, our positions in this question are nevertheless directly opposed. By its very nature, opportunism is national, since it bases itself upon the local and temporary needs of the proletariat and not upon its historical tasks. International control is intolerable for the opportunists, and they reduce their international relations as much as possible to harmless formalities, thereby imitating the Second International. The Brandlerites will salute the conference of the Right wing opposition in Czecho-Slovakia, exchange amicable notes with the Lovestone group in America, etc., provided that no group prevents the other

from conducting its opportunist policy to its own national taste. All this is concealed beneath the cloak of the struggle against bureaucratism and the supremacy of the Russian party.

The Left Opposition can have nothing in common with such practices. International unity is not a decoration for us, but the very axis of our theoretical opinions and our policy. Still, there are not a few ultra-Leftists—and not in Germany alone—who, under the flag of the struggle against the bureaucratic command of the Stalinist apparatus, carry on a semi-conscious struggle for the dismemberment of the from international control.

The Russian Opposition has no less need of international connections, of international control than any other section. But I stronger fear that the conduct of comrade Urbahns is not dictated by the desire to intervene actively in Russian affairs—which could only be welcomed—but rather the contrary: by the desire to separate the German Opposition from the Russian.

A sharp lookout must be kept so that, under the pretext of the struggle against bureaucratism, there is no strengthening of tendencies in the Left Opposition toward separatism, which, in turn, would inevitably lead to bureaucratic degeneration not only on an international but on a national scale.

If the question were asked after thorough reflection: from which side is the Left Opposition at present menaced by the danger of bureaucratism and ossification, it would become completely clear that it is not from the side of international relations. The exaggerated internationalism of the Comintern could arise—on the basis of the former authority of the Russian party—only under the condition of a state power and a cash box. These "dangers" do not exist for the Opposition. On the contrary, there exist others. The pernicious policy of the bureaucracy leads to unrestrained centrifugal tendencies, and to endeavor to crawl back into a national and consequently a sectarian shell, for by remaining within national limits the Left Opposition could be nothing but a sect.

Conclusions

1. A clear position must be adopted on the question of Thermidor and the class character of the present Soviet state. Korschist tendencies must be mercilessly condemned.

2. The position of determined and unreserved defense of the U. S. S. R. against external dangers must be adopted, which does not exclude, but on the contrary presupposes an intransigent struggle against Stalinism, in time of war even more than in time of peace.

3. The program of the struggle for "freedom of organization" and all other "liberties" in the U. S. S. R. must be rejected and condemned, for that is the program of bourgeois democracy. To this program of bourgeois democracy must be opposed the slogans and methods of proletarian democracy, which, in the struggle against bureaucratic centrism, has the task of regenerating and fortifying the dictatorship of the proletariat.

4. A clear position must now be adopted in the Chinese question, so that the next stage does not take us by surprise. A stand must be taken either for the "democratic dictatorship" or the permanent revolution in China.

5. It must be clearly established that the Leninbund is a faction and not a party. From that flows a definite policy towards the party (especially during elections).

6. The tendencies towards national separatism must be condemned. We must actively enter the road of international unification of the Left Opposition on the basis of principled unity.

7. It must be recognized that *Die Fahne des Kommunismus* as it is today does not correspond to its designation of the theoretical organ of the Communist Left. It is absolutely necessary to create in Germany, with the united forces of the German and international Left, a serious Marxist organ capable of giving correct evaluations of the internal policy in Germany in connection with the international situation and its tendencies of development.

These few points, which are far from including all the questions, seem to me the most important and the most pressing. Constantinople, September 7, 1929

A Letter from the Chinese Oppositionists

Shanghai, November 15, 1929.

Dear Comrade Trotsky:

We, the Chinese Bolshevik-Leninists have been conducting a struggle against Stalinism, for the Platform of the Russian Opposition for a year already. The situation in the Party is not very good. The relations between the Party and ourselves is very bad. We learned of your expulsion—that Thermidorian measure of the Stalinist bureaucracy—only after considerable delay, through the intermediary of the Opposition groups in other countries. We have received a letter giving us your address and we are writing to you forthwith. The Chinese Opposition sends you a hearty Bolshevik greeting.

Just as in other countries, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party is under the direction of Stalinist opportunism. The Stalinist political line has not only suffered a defeat in the past, but will inevitably suffer a new one in the future. If we do not succeed in finally eliminating Stalin from the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese revolution will be unable to enter the path of victory. Unfortunately, we understood the truth of the Russian Opposition very late. As soon as it was known to us, we published the principal documents of the Opposition. Besides that, we have our regular publication. And for some time now we have been organizing a central faction of the whole Chinese Opposition.

It is precisely because our active work is a danger to the opportunist Central Committee of our Party, that it recently expelled a good number of Oppositionists. The bureaucrats go still further. Recently, at Canton, they fired openly upon a comrade who directs the Opposition's activity in the Tcheking section. This shameful deed of opportunism must be brought to the knowledge of the working class throughout the world so that the workers may have an idea of the real character of the present opportunist bureaucracy which is ready to employ such methods towards the Bolshevik-Oppositionists! But the counter-revolutionary and the opportunist terror cannot halt our forward march. That is why we are fighting even more obstinately. In the end, victory will be with us.

The Opposition in other countries has sent us letters and propaganda literature. Good contact now exists between us.

We have now published a platform of the Chinese Opposition. In the period that China is now passing through, all our ac-

tivity must follow the political line traced by this platform.

The requirements of the situation have obliged us recently to call a national conference of the Opposition. Many active militants participated. All important questions with which we are confronted were discussed.

We wholly approve of the slogan of the Constituent Assembly.

The former opportunist of the Chinese Communist Party, Tchen Du Hsiu (ex-general secretary of the Party), has been, as you know, expelled for some time. He also fights the Central Committee of the Party. But at bottom he is not against Stalin. Up to now he has not understood the viewpoint of the Opposition. He has simply made use of some passages from the Platform of the Left Opposition against his opponents. We have demanded of Tchen Du-Hsiu: 1. that he publicly declare the Stalinist leadership opportunist; 2. that he openly and honestly condemn his previous opportunist mistakes and that he acknowledge the correctness of the Opposition Platform; 3. that he publicly dissolve his own faction (recently constituted and very weak in numbers). He has rejected our demands and pursues an independent activity. Therefore, we consider that Tchen Du-Hsiu has not broken with opportunism. We have decided to combat him, like every opportunist.

Certain of our comrades think that the slogan of the United States of Asia can be issued on this continent. Is this slogan correct?

In the present conditions in China, the work is more difficult than in the other countries. But the only way for us is to fight against these difficulties.

We believe that the future development and the consolidation of our activity necessitates the organization of an international faction. What is your opinion?

Warm Bolshevik greetings, Ycurs,

—P.

(The next issue of the Militant will contain comrade Trotsky's reply to the Chinese Opposition, which deals with some of the burning problems of the movement.)

\$2,500,000 in Profits in 1929

CHICAGO—(FP)—Hart Schaffner and Marx, biggest clothing makers in the world and pioneers in mass production of men's suits on a union basis, took a profit in 1929 of \$2,514,676. This equals 16.76% on the capital stock and compares with 17.22% for 1928.