

Throughout the World of Labor

A Step Backward by French Syndicalism

The Revolution Proletarienne* has just changed its label. Its first number of the year calls itself revolutionary syndicalist and no longer syndicalist-Communist. That makes for clarity. The editors of the R. P. consider moreover "that there can exist no more genuine proletarian revolutionaries, no more real Communists than the genuine revolutionary syndicalists". The formula would have been correct enough had there been added: before the war. But today, the substitution of the revolutionary-syndicalist label for that of the syndicalist-Communist, implies a very plain retreat, accomplished progressively, and materializing only today.

In the first number, Loriot takes it upon himself to show us that it is not a question of an external formality but rather of a new content, of a final rupture with Communism, that is, with the revolutionary experience of the last fifteen years. The article of Loriot, entitled "The Bankruptcy of the Communist International and the Independence of the Trade Union Movement" adds nothing essential to the arguments expounded two years ago in his pamphlet on "The Problems of the Proletarian Revolution". One finds developed there the same Utopia of a single trade union gathering, one class party of the proletariat (of the type of English Laborism). One finds there the same absence of political perspectives (does Loriot trust to the wholly false analyses of Chambelland?) the same errors concerning the course of the Russian revolution and the same appeal to the "politically enlightened" elements of the proletariat opposed to the "social elements whom ignorance and misery bring to consider violence more as an end than a means". In the meantime, there are in France many C. G. T. members to whom the newly organized minority of the C. G. T. U. has just been added, there is a Communist party and there is also the Communist Opposition. But Loriot does not dwell on these details. At any rate, he does not point out by what processes, thanks to what circumstances, there will issue from all this a single mass trade unionism supplanting all the parties in the accomplishment of the revolution.

However, Loriot has added something unexpected to his program of the role of the Left Communist faction. He does not believe that "the present position of comrade Trotsky and the small groups of the Communist Opposition, which like him, are devoted to the task of regenerating the C. I., is correct." He gives only empirical reasons: few Communists come to us, for five years no substantial Communist nucleus has been able to organize outside the C. I., no influence has been obtained over the party from the outside, etc... The healthy elements are leaving the party and will be replaced by others "only to the extent that the Opposition groups will entertain the idea of the possible regeneration of the C. I." Finally, here is the preemptory conclusion: "The French workers are not content with being liberated from the command of the bureaucrats, who do not think that the party which generates the Communist bureaucracy is capable of ridding itself of this institution, who see the salvation of the proletariat and its revolution in a class and not a sectarian trade union organization, controlling its internal political formations and independent of parties on the outside, will leave the Leninist Opposition to pursue the chimera of the resurrection of a dead past."

We think quite the contrary, because for us "the resurrection of the dead past" is the resurrection impetus of the proletarian under the new capitalist crisis—and not the perspective or thirty or forty years of relative peace between the classes. The party or the trade union are not, for us, instruments of the working class created by the whim of a few individuals; they are the result of certain class relations in struggle. They arise in certain circumstances

*Organ of the Syndicalist League of France, whose leaders include Monatte, Chambelland, Loriot, Louzon, etc., etc.

against which one cannot act, and live in the same manner. Like the trade unions, the Communist party corresponds to certain needs of the class struggle. In the present epoch, it corresponds to the necessity of accomplishing the proletarian revolution, of working immediately on the basis of the revolutionary post-war struggles in Russia, Germany, Austria and elsewhere.

We are entirely disinterested in the academic character of the discussion: which is the "better" proletarian organization to accomplish the revolution? We do not deny the importance and the role of the trade union. That would be foolish. We know that the reformist trade unions often play an important role in the orientation of the mass. But we also know that the reformist trade unions often play the role of a brake in revolutionary action. We want to base ourselves on the experience resulting from the development and the crisis of the Communist parties, that is, from the development of the class struggle itself.

The "degeneration" of the parties plays pretty nearly the same role for the petty bourgeois opportunism for the leadership of the party and the C. G. T. U. It is a hollow phrase. The Left Opposition gives it a precise and concrete sense. It designates by that a false policy. It is not a formal decrepitude, due to old age or disillusion. It is perseverance in a false political line, whose consequences can be fatal, and have in fact been fatal, notably in England and in China. Those who have only disillusion cannot profit by experience; they call everything into question again and admit having deceived themselves in the past. Those who assimilate the objective and subjective reasons that determine this false political line work to reconstitute the nuclei around which will be gathered subsequently the correctly orientated party.

Loriot and the R. P. turn their backs to Communism. That is a fact. They justify those who expelled them. Monatte has written that Sellier was right to expel him from the party. Thus, they also have no interest at all in the fate of the C. I., and consequently of the Russian revolution. It will be said that they have in mind to justify (if not to legitimize) the attacks of Monmousseau. At the same time, they abandon all political perspective, no matter how small. The speech of Chambelland at the last congress of the C. G. T. U. is lamentably weak in this respect. Louzon recommends the surrender of the Chinese Eastern Railway by Russia at the same time that he underlines the great success of Stalin in the collectivization of agriculture. Repelled by "Russian" Bolshevism, the R. P. retreats into a narrowly "French" attitude. It hardly seems to suspect the existence of millions of foreign-born workers in France and the unity of the international struggle, even with the scattered organizations.

Obviously, we fight on a different path. We do not speak of "regenerating" the C. I. as one re-infuses blood into an old organism. But we have no reason to abandon the general principles of the C. I. We want to make up for it in the revolutionary struggle which it is less and less capable of conducting properly, but which only an organization of its type can conduct. We do not prejudice its developments. It may be, and so far as France is concerned, it is probable, that the Communist organization as it exists today is incapable of recovery. But what is essential is to take a correct position under present circumstances.

The fact that the present cadres of official Communists are not susceptible to regeneration does not at all mean that we are not capable of development. Or development is not bound to the retrogression of the party or to its regeneration. It is bound to a correct revolutionary political line, different from that of the party. We do not address ourselves only to the healthy "nuclei" still existing in the party (they are few) but also and above all to the mass that stands outside the party. Our activity is bound to that of the workers who are not satisfied by the policy of the party, but who remain Communists, inside or outside the party. Loriot and his friends bind their fate to those who cannot be satisfied by the policy of the party, but who abandon Com-

munist. There is every reason to think that their position will become still plainer in this sense.

PIERRE NAVILLE.

Paris, January 17, 1930

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Lovestone's German Friends

In the years that followed the defeat of 1923, the Right wing never stood up against the policy of Zinoviev or against that of Stalin. Its leaders formulated no political judgement on the subject of international questions, even though Brandler and Thalheimer, living in Moscow, were very well informed on the internal policy of the Comintern. Today they explain their silence by the obedience to discipline.

But the real reason for their silence was their desire to "conquer" the German party by means of this same bureaucratic apparatus whose faults they refrained from disclosing. Not knowing whether it was Stalin or Bucharin who would prevail, they dared not take a position for one or the other. Today, they convert this cowardice into a theory, saying: We have no business mixing in the internal affairs of the Russian Communist Party. That is a very singular attitude for internationalist revolutionaries. Why was it necessary to observe discipline up to 1923, and why did it cease, beginning with that date? And did not Brandler say during a meeting of his faction at Leipzig that he hoped to receive the German party from the hands of Stalin? Before his departure from Moscow Stalin is said to have told him that if, in the future, the Right wing should gain sufficient influence in the German party, he would conduct his policy with it.

The Right wing views the defeat of October, 1923 as a "legend". According to its spokesmen, there was no defeat and it maintains this point of view in spite of the flat refutation produced by the years that followed, by the economic and political stability of capitalism.

That is why they are always for the tactic of the united front with the social democracy, in the manner extolled by them in 1923. And logically, one of them, Paul Boettcher, applies this tactic to England and declares that the defeat of the C. I. there is due to the fact that this kind of a united front was not sufficiently realized there.

Thalheimer is hostile to the struggle against the Kulak. But generally speaking, the Right wing does not take a position in Russian questions.

In Saxony, its faction was very strong for many years; it nevertheless suffered a heavy defeat in the elections. It received only 22,500 votes and no mandate. Immediately after the electoral results, many functionaries of the first order belonging to the Right wing faction went over to the social democratic party.

In Leipzig, it attempted to form a party grouping together the remnants of the Independent Socialist party and the Ledebour group. At a meeting of these groupings, the representatives of the Independent Social Democratic "party" declared that the U. S. S. R. could not be defended while Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks were imprisoned. And he is a member of the committee for the defense of the U. S. S. R.

The Right wing boasts, in Leipzig, of being in touch with the French Opposition. The French Opposition is the Alsatian group of Hueber, which is intimately connected with the clerical autonomists. To defend themselves for this relationship the Right wing leaders declare that they are not "completely" in accord with the Alsatians, but why not make use of the Alsatian organ while they have the possibility of writing in it!

The attempt of the Right wing to found a new party of the type of the Second and a Half International, will not succeed. That period is historically passed.

Our own task, the task of the Left Opposition, is to win the workers who have gone to the Right, driven by discontentment with the bureaucratic policy of the C. P. The Leninbund, not clear on the formal questions and the work to be accomplished, has not been able to assemble the revolutionary forces of the Opposition. It

The Results of the Soviet-China Conflict

1. In its last stage, the conflict revealed as is known the complete military impotence of the present Chinese power. This shows clearer than anything that we have in China not a victorious bourgeois revolution, as Louzon, Urbahn and others think, for a victorious revolution would have consolidated the army and power. We have in China a victorious counter-revolution, directed against the overwhelming majority of the nation, and therefore incapable of creating an army.

2. At the same time, it shows in a striking manner the inconsistency of the Menshevik policy of Stalin-Martinov based since the beginning of 1924 on the assumption that the "national" Chinese bourgeoisie is capable of heading the revolution. In reality, the bourgeoisie was only capable, with the political support of the Comintern and the material aid of the imperialists, of smashing the revolution and thus reducing the Chinese state to complete impotence.

3. The Soviet-Chinese conflict, in its military stage, revealed thus the enormous preponderance of the proletarian revolution, even though weakened by the wrong policy of the leadership for the last few years, towards the bourgeois counter-revolution, which had at its disposal the substantial diplomatic and material support of imperialism.

4. The victory of the October revolution over the April counter-revolution (the overthrow by Chiang Kai-Shek in April, 1927), can in no sense be considered a victory for Stalin's policy. On the contrary, the latter has suffered a series of heavy defeats. The very seizure of the railroad was Chiang Kai-Shek's payment for the services rendered by Stalin. Stalin's subsequent gamble on Feng Yu-Hsiang was just as completely inconsistent. The Opposition warned against the adventurist combinations with Feng Yu-Hsiang against Chiang Kai-Shek after April 1927, just as energetically as it protested against the bloc of Stalin with Chiang Kai-Shek.

5. The unprincipled gamble on the Kellogg Pact suffered a no less heavy blow. The adhesion of the Soviet government to the pact of American imperialism was just as shameful a capitulation of the Soviet government as it was useless. By his adherence to the pact, that pretended instrument of peace, Stalin openly assisted the American government to deceive the working masses of America and Europe. What was the aim of this adherence? Evidently to gain the good will of the United States and thereby hasten diplomatic recognition. As should have been expected, this aim was not achieved, for the American government had no reason to pay in cash for what it got for nothing. New York took the first opportunity, basing itself on the Kellogg Pact, to play the role of protector of China against the Soviet republic. Moscow was obliged to reply with a sharp rebuke. That was right and inevitable. But it is perfectly clear that the compulsory demonstration against the American government's attempt to intervene disclosed the whole criminal light-mindedness with which Stalin adhered to the Kellogg Pact.

6. There still remains the question of the revolutionary Communist detachment under the leadership of Tchu-Deh. Pravda reported about it on the eve of the transition of the conflict into a military stage. After that, we hear no more about those Chinese workers and peasants whom somebody sent into armed battle under the banner of Communism. What were the aims of the struggle? What was the role of the Party in it? What was the fate of this detachment? And finally, in what mysterious kitchen are all these questions decided?

On this last point, no less important than all the rest, a final balance cannot yet be drawn. But everything speaks for the fact that bureaucratic adventurism here, like everywhere else, bears the responsibility for the weakening and exhaustion of the reserves of the Chinese Revolution. January 3, 1930 —L.TROTSKY

will be unable to do it except by remedying this grave defect. Leipzig, January 1930. —ROMAN WELL