

For an International Conference of the Left

The Need For Organizing the World Opposition

There is need now to begin preparations to convene an International Conference of the forces of the Left Opposition. Many factors make such a conference both necessary and possible. It is not even a "forced march"; the world situation, the status and policy of the Communist International, urge such a gathering of the Left Opposition throughout the world. Economic and political struggles, arising out of the depressed and receding strength of international capitalism, are taking place on an increasing scale. In these the Opposition plays its part, but it must consider in what manner its role can be more decisive, both directly and through pressure by correct policy and tactics upon the Communist International and its sections in each country.

A steady and growing number of defeats have been inflicted on the proletariat and the Communist Parties in every country (alleviated only by incidental victories of a not very marked character here and there), in the past six years under the influence and direction of the Stalin-Bucharin regime. These range from the catastrophe in the Chinese Revolution (1925-1927); Anglo-Russian Committee debacle; the pro-Kulak policy, until recently in the Soviet Union; up to the May 1st, 1929 adventures in Germany and the washed-out August 1st International demonstrations against war—to mention a few of the outstanding events. For these defeats, Stalin and Stalinism, leaning strongly in these years upon the Right wing, bear the main responsibility. Trade union policy and activity, as embodied in the resolutions and theses and decisions of the Second and Third Congresses of the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions, when under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, have become a caricature coupled with either the abandonment or grotesque modification of tested united front tactics, have brought isolation of the militants from the mass unions, and sectarianism into practice on a world scale. There is need for a conference of the Leninist-Bolsheviks, of the Left wing, under the leadership of L. D. Trotsky, to examine thoroughly the situation before the world's working class and in the Comintern, and to elaborate a program of action that will more quickly defeat Stalinism and turn the Communist movement again on a correct path. That the bureaucrats are subject to proletarian pressure, even though yielding more comfortably and easily to the opportunists and revisionists of the Right wing, is a fact of experience. But the Left wing must turn the screws still tighter.

Opposition Problems Need Elaboration

A conference is needed to elaborate the position of the Left Opposition toward the Comintern, the U. S. S. R., and Stalinism. That there is wanted more clarity is evidenced by the differences that arose in some sections of the Opposition (German Leninbund, Belgium) on the Sino-Russian conflict; the attitude toward the recent capitulators to Stalinism (Radek, et al); Thermidorism; etc.

At the same time the Left Opposition has reached the point and possibility where it is necessary and able to establish an international political platform as a guide for the Oppositions in the various countries. Some of the Oppositions, among them the Leninbund (Germany), Bordiga group in Italy, Communist League (United States and Canada), China have drawn up platforms and given their estimate of the international situation and the tasks of the Communists. The basic conceptions of the Left Opposition on the theory of socialism in one country; the Chinese Revolution; role of the Party; party democracy, etc. are incorporated soundly in the Opposition forces. What is needed is to clarify as much as possible such differences as may and do exist; to draft the general platform for all the Opposition; to assist one another in the specific tasks of each country; to lay the basis for the unification and centralization of the organization and activities of the Left Opposition on an international scale.

In little more than a year of the past, the Platform of the Opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the activities of the Left Opposition in other countries have made a definite and good

impression on the rank and file workers in the Communist Parties. This too, on an increasing scale among the proletarian forces in the C. P. S. U., among the Russian proletariat generally, and particularly among the party members and workers in the large factories in Leningrad, Moscow and other large cities. Opposition determination, the needs of the workers there, are more and more breaking through the Stalinist suppression and terror. The voice of the Leninist-Bolshevik is being heard and his message read. A major task of the International Opposition is to assist the Russian Leninist-Bolsheviks in their tasks with propaganda, material aid, etc.

Opposition Growing

The correctness of the views of the Left Opposition are accepted by larger numbers in the Communist Parties and the proletariat each day, by open declaration or silent acquiescence, or a waiting policy. The zig-zag Stalinist line fools less and less. Even now, the sudden dizzy "Left" zig-zag of the Stalinists in the Soviet Union and internationally, a course undertaken without conviction or understanding by the chinovniks, apparatus-men, shows signs of weakening and again gradually yielding (later a collapse?) to the Right wing opportunists (the removal of the so-called ultra-left, Fried, in Cecho-Slovakia, the speech of Manuilsky against the Left are the first straws). Only the active intervention of the genuine Left Opposition everywhere can serve to try to push the apparatus of the Stalinist Centrists and the Right wing onto a proletarian course. To do this more effectively, coordinated international activity and policy of the Opposition is required.

The Stalinist apparatus-men and the Right wing alike proclaim our "death" and have many times chanted our swan song. They may bow to ikons if they want to. The Opposition has its life in historic need and revolutionary activity. The more that Stalin and Bucharin maintain their revisionism of Marx and Lenin by the theory of socialism in one country as against an international revolutionary movement, the broader grows the international ring of the Left Opposition, encircling and isolating this social-democratic theory and Stalin in the narrow confines of national reformism. Stalin, through terror and suppression, makes his way yet in the Soviet Union. But the growing International Left, the increase of its press in the past year, the formation of new Left Opposition movements throughout the world indicate its growing strength and influence.

There is need to cite only the organization and development of the Left Opposition in the United States and Canada, Argentine, Mexico, China and other countries, not to mention the older European Oppositions. The capitulators find little comfort in the increasing proletarian cohorts of the Opposition. These found their way to the Opposition through understanding, and the pressure of the Stalinist chinovniks will not avail against them. It is this very growth of the Oppositions, with their own special problems, the need to define the particular roles of each Opposition (the United States and Belgium as contrasted, for instance, with Germany and France); the problem of the illegality of the Opposition (C. P. S. U.); the acute difficulties of work of the Opposition in China (illegality under Chiang Kai-Shek together with Stalinist suppression) that make advisable an international conference to work out our problems. The extreme conditions under which the Opposition operate make sectarian practice and an incorrect attitude toward the Comintern and the Communist Parties an easy swamp into which to fall. A conference which will discuss how we can increase our influence and activity among the masses and energize our movement in the Communist Parties will help greatly.

The open discussion of such issues as have arisen in the Left Opposition in some countries have helped to clarify our tasks. There is no need to wall about that. However sharp these discussions have been, they will aid the development of unity on a commonly accepted platform. An International Conference should make it possible for ALL groups and tendencies in the Left Opposition to be present and fully heard as an aid toward unity. Secondary issues,

which tend to obscure main lines, can then be brushed aside.

An International Opposition Organ

An exchange of views in the press of the Opposition is required. At the same time, we must discuss ways and means to transform into reality an international opposition organ, published in three languages at least, if at all possible, and to develop plans for a wide circulation. Such an organ will go a long way toward the theoretical education of the Left Opposition and the Communists generally.

At this conference should be elected an Executive Committee of the International Opposition to centralize the work of the Opposition. If possible representatives of a few of the European countries and also one from America and China should remain

The Third Period of the Comintern's Mistakes

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rise in the world market, are not yet in any way—precisely because they are isolated and fragmentary—"tremendous revolutionary events". But Molotov wants to combine the isolated strikes. A praiseworthy task. But in the meantime, only a task, and not an accomplished step. To unite isolated strikes—Molotov teaches—is possible by means of mass political strikes. Yes, having at hand the necessary conditions, the working class may be united by revolutionary mass strikes. The problem of the mass strike is then, according to Molotov, "that new, that basic and most characteristic problem which stands in the center of the tactical tasks of the Communist Parties at the given moment". "And this means"—continues our strategist—"that we have approached (this time only "approached"—L. T.) new and higher forms of class struggle". And in order definitely to affirm the Tenth Plenum religion of the Third Period, Molotov adds: "We could not have advanced the slogan of a mass political strike, if we had not found ourselves in a period of ascent." This trend of thought is truly unexampled! At first both strategic feet entered the most tremendous revolutionary events, later on it appeared that before the theoretical head stands only the task of the general strike—not the general strike itself, but only its slogan. And from here alone, by the inverse method, the conclusion is made that we "have approached the highest forms of class struggles". Because, don't you see, had we not approached them, then how could Molotov advance the slogan of the general strike? The whole construction is based on the word of honor of the newly made strategist. And the powerful representatives of the parties respectfully listened to the self-confident blockhead and upon roll call reply: "Right you are!"

At any rate, we find out that all countries, from Great Britain to China—with France, Germany and Poland at the head have now attained the slogan of the general strike. We are finally convinced that not a trace is left of the unhappy law of uneven development. We might manage to be reconciled to this, if they would only tell us in the name of what political aims the slogan of the general strike is advanced in every country. It should at least not be forgotten that the workers are by no means inclined towards general strikes just for the sake of general strikes. Anarcho-syndicalism broke its head on the failure to understand this. The general strike may sometime have the character of a protest demonstration. Such a strike is realizable, generally speaking, in cases when some clear, sometimes unexpected, event stirs the imagination of the masses and produces the necessity for unanimous resistance. But a strike demonstration is not yet, in the true sense, a revolutionary political strike, it is only one of the preparatory rehearsals for it. As far as the revolutionary political strike is concerned, in the real sense of the word, it constitutes, so to speak, the final act in the struggle of the proletariat for power. Paralyzing the normal functions of the capitalist state, the general strike, brings forward the question: Who is master in the house? This question is decided in no other way than by armed force. That is why a revolutionary strike which

in the city of the headquarters of the Executive of the Left Opposition.

The International Opposition Conference has to lay out a campaign for an even more thorough expose among the Communist Parties and the mass of workers of Stalin and Stalinism, their methods of suppression and terror against the Leninist-Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union; the blow against the Russian Revolution in the deportation of the outstanding living leader of Bolshevism, Leon Trotsky; and to broaden the activities for the reinstatement of the Left Opposition throughout the world into the ranks of the Communist International and the return of Trotsky and the Opposition to their rightful position and role in the U. S. S. R.

The European comrades, particularly in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Austria should take the initiative to form a Committee of Action to lay the basis for such an International Conference. When agreement has been reached as to time, place and character of the Conference, the needed steps to bring the delegations from the various countries together can then be taken.

—MARTIN ABERN

does not lead to an armed uprising ends finally with the defeat of the proletariat. If, therefore, Molotov's words regarding revolutionary political strikes and "highest forms of struggle" have any sense at all, it is this: simultaneously, or almost simultaneously, throughout the world, the revolutionary situation has reached such maturity that it puts the Communist Parties of the West and East, North and South before the general strike as the immediate prologue to armed uprising.

It is sufficient to formulate correctly Molotov's strategy of the "Third Period" for its absurdity to be revealed.

"The Conquest of the Street"

Along with the general strike is set the task of "the conquest of the street". The question here—at any rate in words—is not that of the defense of one of the "democratic" rights, trampled upon by the bourgeois and social democracy, but of the determination of the "right" of the proletariat—to barricades. That is precisely how "the conquest of the streets" has been interpreted in the numerous articles of the official Communist press immediately after the July Plenum. It is not for us to deny the right of the proletariat to the "conquest of the streets" by means of barricades. But it is necessary to clearly understand what this means. Before all one must make clear to himself that the proletariat does not go on the barricades for the sake of the barricades, just as he does not participate in strikes for the sake of strikes. There are required immediate political purposes, welding together millions and giving firm support to the vanguard. That is how revolutionists pose the question. The opportunists gone mad approach the question quite differently.

For the revolutionary "conquest of the street"—art for art's sake—they set aside special days. The last invention of this sort appeared, as is known, the First of August. Ordinary mortals wondered: why the First of August, the failure of which was pre-determined by the failure of the First of May? What do you mean, why?—the officials strategists answered excitedly: for the conquest of the streets! Precisely what is to be understood by that: the conquest of the sidewalk or the pavement! Heretofore we thought, that the task of the revolutionary party is the conquest of the masses, and that the policy which can mobilize the masses to the greatest number and most actively inevitably opens up the street, no matter how the police block and lock it. The struggle for the street cannot be an independent task separated from the political struggle of the masses and subordinated to the office schedule of Molotov.

And what is more important, you cannot fool history. The task is not to appear stronger, but to get stronger. A noisy masquerade will not help. When there is no "Third Period" it is possible to invent it. It is possible to manufacture dozens of resolutions. But to make the Third Period on the streets according to the calendar—is impossible. On this road the Communist Parties will find only defeat, in some cases tragic ones, but more often simply stupid and humiliating ones.

(To Be Continued)