

An Open Letter to All Members of the Leninbund

Esteemed Comrades:

by L. D. TROTSKY

It is perfectly clear from the circular dated January 29, 1930 published by the Leninbund, that the conference of the Leninbund scheduled for February 23 has for its task the formal sanctioning of the conflict, by the exclusion of the Marxist Opposition. The bureau of the Leninbund itself defined the task in this manner.

I leave aside completely all personalities and all disputes and recriminations relative to the organization itself. These, naturally, are of certain significance in the life of the organization. Nevertheless, they cannot decide the question of unity or splitting of the party; this question must be solved by the interaction of differences in principle, theoretical and political. It is not always, nor under all circumstances, that unity within the organization must remain inviolate. In cases where the differences assume a fundamental character, a split at times appears to be the only solution possible. But care must be taken that this be a genuine split, i. e., that it should not depart from the line of differences in principle and that this line is brought clean-cut before the eyes of all the members of the organization.

Leaving this angle, it is necessary to say that the circular letter of the bureau of the Leninbund of the 20th and 29th of January cannot but better prepare the ground for a split through proceeding in the most dangerous and pernicious manner to place in the foreground the question of disagreement, while distorting the sense of the differences in principle by means of false information. This I shall attempt to prove.

Has the Urbahns Faction Any Adherents?

The point of departure in the present differences is that of the class character of the Soviet Union. This question is not national but international. No revolutionary organization exists or can exist which has not reached a conclusion for itself on this question, and which has not drawn the necessary "internal" conclusions therefrom. It is impossible to have a correct national policy without a solution of this international question.

The bureau of the Leninbund claims in its circular that Urbahns' point of view on "the class character of the Soviet Union" is adhered to by the following organizations: "the majority of the Belgian opposition, the Treint group and 'Centre le Courant' in France, the Czech group, and to a large extent by the American opposition."

This false allegation, counting on the lack of information among the membership of the Leninbund, is made with the intention of leading them into a serious error. Any local organization of the Leninbund can easily obtain the proper information by merely writing to the above-named groups.

The bureau of the Belgian opposition has published several erroneous articles on the subject of the Chinese-Eastern Railway. It has, nevertheless, determinedly broken with the bureau of the Leninbund on everything relating to the class character of the Soviet Union. This makes it quite proper for us to look upon the error of the Brussels comrades as of an individual and episodic character. Similar errors are inevitable in the course of carrying on work. To break because of these individual errors would be absolutely criminal. But a break becomes inevitable when the deviations give rise to an orientation false in principle. An irreconcilable difference exists between the bureau of the Leninbund and that of the Belgian opposition on the question of the class character of the Soviet Union. Communicate with Brussels, comrades, and be convinced.

As far as fundamental questions are concerned, two French groups—Treint and "Centre Le Courant"—ranged themselves from the very beginning, at least formally, on the side of the Russian Opposition. I

know of no document which would lead one to believe that they were ever at one with Urbahns on the question of the class character of the Soviet Union. Is it possible that they have changed their opinions of late? I do not know. In any case, you would render a great service not only to yourselves but also to the Treint and Paz groups by asking for their attitude towards the class character of the Soviet Union at the present time, February, 1930.

By the term "Czech group", the circular plainly refers to a small group of Prague students having, as I understand, no connection with the working-class movement. This group does not maintain a publication. Judging from its physiognomy, I would say that this group does, in truth, share Urbahns' point of view.

But what is unquestionably pure invention, is the assertion in the circular concerning the American Opposition. From the evidence of the *Militant*, the group's weekly paper and one of the best among the organs of the Communist press, the Communist League of America has nothing in common with Urbahns' point of view.

Hence, as far as the question of basic differences is concerned—aside from the small group of Prague students—the bureau of the Leninbund is completely isolated. And why be surprised? Urbahns, in developing and aggravating his error in his recent articles, gives us a new theory of the state which, in general, has nothing in common with the Marxist theory and which is distinguished from social-democratic theory only by its phraseology.

Do Not Forget the International Opposition

The two circulars attempt to define the attitude of the Opposition in the following manner: "Whoever does not share comrade Trotsky's opinions is not opposed to Leninism." They are driven to this infamous subterfuge as a means of alleviating the isolation of the Leninbund bureau. And why does Urbahns speak of "Comrade Trotsky's opinions"? The Russian Opposition has a platform established through the direct participation of hundreds of comrades. For defending this platform, thousands of comrades have been subjected to expulsion, to arrest, to deportation, and even to being shot. So to speak here of the personal opinions of comrade Trotsky is proof of a revolting disregard and disrespect toward the Russian Opposition.

The Leninbund Bureau persistently fails to take note of the Verite group in France, which maintains a political weekly and a monthly theoretical journal, *La Lutte des Classes*. He is blind who does not understand that this group is today the pivot around which is united the Communist Opposition in France.

The Communist League of America represents one of the best sections of the Opposition and is growing daily. The Leninbund bureau does not seem to realize this. Regarding the Belgian Opposition, there is no doubt that despite the disputes that have arisen in its midst, it will not hesitate for an instant in choosing between the International Opposition and the Urbahns group. The Leninbund bureau shuts its eyes to facts and lulls itself, as well as others, with vain hopes.

The Czech Left Opposition (comrade Leonorovitch's group) which carries on activity among the workers, and is about to start editing its journal, shares the point of view of the International Opposition on all fundamental questions.

The Chinese Opposition is no less irreconcilable with the opinions of Urbahns.

Lastly, the Leninbund bureau has no reason to expect any support whatever from the Opposition in Italy, Spain, Hungary, etc.

Even if the Leninbund bureau could hope to derive support from any foreign groups, it is only—and then only to a certain extent—from the groups represent-

ed by Treint and Paz. And yet, have they achieved an agreement in principle on any question whatever? Let them tell us openly.

The Urbahns Bloc Treint and Paz

Urbahns is the adherent of an independent party. This is his dominant idea. Treint and Paz up till now have been against this. Have they arrived at an agreement at the present time? And on precisely what point?

Urbahns has again put up his "independent" candidates in the municipal elections against the candidates of the Communist Party. With what result?—the continued weakening of the Leninbund. With Urbahns this suicidal policy is motivated by the idea of creating a second party. Are Treint and Paz of the same mind? Let them declare themselves. Or perhaps these internationalists are not interested in German affairs.

And how does this bear on the unions? Paz is for autonomy in the unions, but—differing from Monatte—does not deny the need for a Communist Party. This is an old Jauresist attitude, diplomatic and opportunist to the core; an attitude which Marxists have never stopped attacking and which they will always continue to attack mercilessly in the future. Does Urbahns ally himself with the party of trade union autonomy, in this Jauresist sense? Or does he think that French affairs do not concern him?

Will Treint and Paz work with Urbahns and with the Brandler bloc formed in the midst of the trade unions, against the Communist Party? or perhaps Treint and Paz believe that they are not interested in affairs at Hamburg?

In what light does Urbahns look at Paz's touching romance with the national "communists" of Alsace? Or does Urbahns consider it not worth his while to be interested in Alsace since its cession to France?

Let us see, then—what is the particular point on which these three groups could manage to agree? It is only on the point of the struggle against the Russian Opposition. All three have censured Rakovsky's declaration. Indeed, they are too revolutionary for such "compromises". There are good grounds for thinking so. They recognize the policy of a united front with the social democracy, with the reformist trade unions, with the Brandlerites, with the Alsatian nationalists—but they consider inadmissible the united front tactic with the official Communist Parties. The fact is that if we examine, not from a fanciful or demagogic, but from a political point of view, Rakovsky's declaration, it is seen to represent nothing but the Opposition's policy of a united front toward the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Urbahns' attitude in this question is again explained by his orientation on a second party. But how are we to explain the attitude of Treint and Paz? There is no explanation—except the confusion and complete absence of principles in their thinking.

In a word, their thoughts, without exception, consist only of reticences, diplomacy, ambiguities and quibbling. The new allies do not dare to approach any question seriously and in earnest, fearing that the structure of this newly-concluded amalgamation, built on sand, will start tottering. This is adventurism in ideas. It has never been successful—and never will be.

It is Indispensable to Obtain Unity of the Opposition

Several months ago, the bureau of the Leninbund expelled comrades Grylevitch and Joko—defenders of the opinions of the International Opposition. This gesture alone is enough to show that the Urbahns group has no desire to work hand in hand with the International Opposition. It is unmistakably clear that we cannot admit

two sets of opinions: one of them for our own particular use, and the other—for the world. This duality is and always has been the characteristic trait of opportunists, especially of the Brandlerites. Their "internationalism" is, as everyone knows, nothing but the arithmetical sum of national oppositions added together. With this we have nothing in common. Our international orientation and our national policy are bound together by unbreakable ties.

From its first steps, the Opposition must clearly declare itself as an international fraction—as did the Communist parties in the period of the publication of the Communist Manifesto or of the First International, or of the Left Zimmerwald at the beginning of the war. In all these cases the groups were mostly small numerically, or even isolated individuals: all, nevertheless, conducted themselves as though representing an entire international organization. In the epoch of imperialism, a similar attitude imposes itself a hundred times more categorically than in the time of Marx.

Whoever imagines that the International Left will at a given time be reduced to the simple expression of the national groups added together, and that for this reason the formation of its international unity can be delayed until the national groups feel themselves "strengthened"—attributes only a secondary importance to the international factor and, by this very means, lands on the road of national opportunism.

It is undeniable that each country has its characteristic traits which may be very important in themselves; but in our epoch their true value cannot be estimated nor can they be made useful to the revolutionary cause except when looked at from an international point of view. But only international organization can represent international ideology.

Can anyone seriously believe it possible that these isolated opposition groups, abandoned and left to their own efforts, should find the right road? No. Their road will be one that will lead them direct to degeneracy, sectarianism, in short, to their doom. In order to attain its aims, the International Opposition must surmount enormous difficulties. It is only by being indissolubly bound together, by working out together the answers to the questions of the hour, by creating an international platform, by imposing on ourselves the reciprocal verification of each step; in a word, it is only by uniting in a single international entity, that the national opposition groups can carry through to the end their historic task.

This applies to all groups without exception, and above all to the Russian Opposition. The year which has just passed is a year of capitulations, large sections of the Russian Opposition have been infected by this epidemic, and this happened only because of their isolation from other opposition groups in foreign countries; because they were not present at and did not know the life of the Communist International; in general because they had not reflected well on the problems before it. It is because of this that they allowed themselves to be made ridiculous by the Stalinist left zig-zags on internal question in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

True and False Internationalism

The Left Opposition has already lost enough time. The disastrous development of the Leninbund, the errors of certain national groups, the marking time of others, have been due to the powerful, even decisive, role played by the national isolation of the groups and their simplistic methods of political activity. If the Communist Left Opposition does not wish an inglorious end, its reduction to zero, it must cast away from itself these tendencies of expectation and consolidate its international ranks.

The Brandlerites pride themselves on not having connections with any Russian groups. What does this mean? A revolutionary organization which is not in agree-

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