

THE MILITANT

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A BIG STEP FORWARD CONFLICT SHARP IN INDIA

The International Conference of the Left Opposition

On April 6, a step of the greatest consequence for the world Communist movement was taken in Paris. In response to a call signed by the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition), the Communist League of France (La Verite), and the Communist League of America, delegates from practically all the important groups of the Left Opposition in the Communist movement gathered for their first representative international conference. They decided to issue an international bulletin, and formed a secretariat to direct the work of our fraction and the discussion of those questions which still require clarification.

The Conference Representation

Representing the French group, were comrades Rosmer and Naville; for the United Left Opposition in Germany, comrade Oskar Selpold, Communist member of the Prussian Landtag; for the Belgian Opposition, comrade Hennaut, with comrade Lesoil from the Charleroi federation; comrade Gorkin from the Spanish Opposition; Fraenkel for the Czecho-Slovakian Opposition (Leonorovics group); Peri for the Italian Left (Bordiga group); Szilvassy for the Hungarian group; Obin for the Jewish Opposition group in France; and Shachtman from the Communist League of America. Endorsements of the conference were received from the Russian comrades, from the group in Greece, and a second Czech Opposition group, composed of students, in Prague. Financial and other pressing difficulties prevented these latter from sending delegates, as was also the case with the Chinese, Austrian, Mexican and Argentine groups. Subsequent correspondence has already shown that virtually all these groups will collaborate in the work of the International Secretariat and the Bulletin.

The same spirit that actuated the militant groups of revolutionists that gathered at Zimmerwald and Kienthal to salvage the movement from the ruins of socialist betrayal in 1914, pervaded the Paris conference. All the comrades were motivated by the ever more urgent need of firmly uniting on a world scale the Marxist core of the Communist International. The conflict between the formation of groups in every important country on the basis of the struggle for internationalism, and the lack of organized international coordination was, to a great extent, brought to an end by the conference. The first step was taken—a big step made imperative not only by the situation in the official movement which requires our united intervention, but also by the conditions prevailing in the Left Opposition itself.

The Communist Opposition is a product of the development of the Comintern, with which it is indissolubly bound up by its whole past. The weakening of the International, therefore, could not fail to involve the Opposition, at least in the first stage. Even more: insofar as the weakening of the International was caused by a series of defeats of the revolution and a strengthening of the social democracy, that process had an effect most heavily the Left wing of Communism. The moods of disillusionment and decline was directed primarily against the revolutionary tendency.

The Centrist apparatus, which became stronger with the weakening of the revolutionary movement, utilized all the advantages (Continued on Page 4)

The Left Wing and the Amalgamated Convention

The national convention of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America is scheduled to open in Toronto on May 12. Outside of one or two sympathizers with the Left wing movement there will be no Left wing group among the delegates. The Party policy in this union has revealed its own bankruptcy by the virtual elimination of the Left wing from any influence. The only semblance of a fight at the convention may be an open struggle between the Hillman and Beckerman cliques, i. e., half a dozen of one or six of the other. With all the talk of the "third period", of very, very revolutionary action of winning the masses over night and the rest of the empty phraseology of the "new line", the Party, and the official Left wing it controls, have done nothing—absolutely nothing—to prepare for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America convention! Only at the last minute, two brief weeks before the convention, the General Executive Board of the Left wing needle trades union has appointed a sub-committee to meet with a committee of the T. U. U. L. and then bring in recommendations for a policy! With the excellent situation for the Left wing created in the A. C. W. A. by the corruption prevalent and the crude class collaboration policy of the bureaucracy—coupled with genuine dissatisfaction in the ranks—the Party controlled Left wing has neither program, nor policy, nor has it made any efforts to organize a fight.

The criminal neglect of this situation—not only of the convention, but of the union as a whole which is the only organized expression of the men tailors—stamps the Party leaders properly: Phrasemongers. Their "mass work", their "winning the masses for the new line", and all the rest of their bluff, begins and ends with manifestos and proclamations in the Party press. With or without them, or in spite of them, the Left wing must take form again in the A. C. W. A. It is up to the rank and file to speak and act. The columns of the Militant are open to them. Readers will find the first of a series of articles on the situation in the A. C. W. A. on page 6 of this issue.

The Popular Militant Spirit

So serious has the situation become in India, that the Viceroy, Lord Irwin, has found it necessary to proclaim a new ordinance to censor the press which goes further than the notorious press act of 1910. Despite the rigid censorship, sufficient news has managed to leak out to indicate that there is a genuinely revolutionary temper pervading the masses of the miserably exploited Indian masses.

Conflicts Increase

Conflicts between Indians and government forces have become a daily occurrence. Scores upon scores have already been arrested, 26 in Calcutta alone in one day, after the shooting of a British soldier. The native regiments are not being counted upon by the British imperialists as they had hoped. During the Peshawar riots last week, it was later disclosed, at least two platoons—that much is officially admitted—"were found to be unsatisfactory", that is, to do murder work for Britain's financial lords.

So serious has the feeling of the masses become that the so-called Nationalist leaders, from Gandhi down, have felt compelled to "do something agin' th government" in order to retain their hold upon the millions. Gandhi, under the guise of an opposition to British rule which he will give up (as he has done in the past) at the first sign of a genuinely revolutionary force appearing on the scene, is actually conducting a reactionary campaign. He is spreading the thoroughly reactionary idea that the primitive fabrication of native cloth is not only superior to the advanced manufacture of machine cloth, but is one of the ways of unloading the burden of British rule!

The great difficulty for the Indian liberation movement is that it is still dominated by such people as Gandhi, who can lead it only into a swamp of betrayal. A substantial revolution movement, a Communist Party, does not, or as much as does not exist and the mis-leadership of Gandhi is not yet challenged. The Indian masses are showing their militant spirit, however, and Gandhi will not be forever able to direct it into theatrical, mystic, and—to Britain—harmless channels.

ATTENTION!

Just as we go to press, the committee in charge informs us that the Labor Temple, 14th Street and 2nd Avenue, has been obtained for a mass meeting on Thursday, May 15th, to hear Max Shachtman, editor of the Militant, who has just returned from Europe. Comrade Shachtman spent a number of weeks in Paris, where he attended the International Conference of the Left Opposition as delegate from the United States, and in Berlin, at the unity conference of the German Communist Opposition. In addition, he paid a lengthy visit to comrade Leon Trotsky in Turkey, and at the meeting he will bring the American militants a greeting from the great Bolshevik leader. Shachtman will speak on the situation in Russia and the prospects of the revolutionary movement in Europe and the United States, reporting also the viewpoint of the Left Opposition in general, and especially of comrade Trotsky. All workers are invited to attend this important lecture. Questions will be asked at the end. Admission will be 25 cents.

The Marine Workers Convention

By S. M. Rose

The seamen's convention held in New York from April 26 to the 27, unquestionably represented a number of highlights in the history of the movement. The first and most significant one was that for the first time in years a real, representative convention, in the sense that genuine seamen and dock workers from all the leading ports of the country, came together to organize a real union. The first day of the convention was shot through with an evident feeling and desire really to launch a marine workers' industrial union, and all the "third period" preparations seemed to have no effect. By the end of the second day it was quite evident to any understanding observer that most of the men in the convention were satisfied that a union had not been properly organized, at least beyond the formal act of naming the result a "union".

The convention was opened with the customary blessings of the Mink, Johnstone (representing the T.U.U.L.) reading a letter of political direction penned by Foster in the Tombs, and from that point the seamen started making motions as if they seriously meant to get down to business. Suggestions were made from the floor for the organization of the usual committees to facilitate the work, only to be silenced by a "broad" proposal made by the chairman, Harvey, that the national committee of the T. U. U. L. had certain definite recommendations about a general committee which was to perform all these functions. This took most of the men unawares, and without much discussion, the committee was accepted. It consisted of hand-picked, "reliable" Party members. Not a single "outsider" was on it.

The Mink Explodes

The first stir of any opposition in the convention emanated from a ship's dele-

gate, Bill Drennan, a member of the M. T. W. (I. W. W.) who raised the question of seriatim adoption of the constitution. This gave the great Mink an opportunity to vent all his ignorant bile against the I. W. W., Trotskyites and Lovestonites, and all those not baptized by the proper holy water. In ignorance and vilification, there has rarely been anything like it. After the Mink got through with his illiterate explosion Jack Johnstone with a benign smile, got up and "explained" that things were not quite so bad as the Mink would have us believe; that the I.W.W., of which about half the men present had been members at one time or another, did make militant history on the waterfront. With this bit of blarney, he proceeded to exhort them to use this background as a basis for building the new union. Good; only he neglected to explain in addition why so many Wobblies or ex-Wobs who had been associated with the Marine Workers League, and dared entertain ideas or thing for himself, had been chiselled out of the organization by mechanical manipulation of Messrs. Mink, Sparks and Co.

Here it might be in place to note that one of the paradoxical occurrences was the fact that in the back of the hall sat about 15 or 20 men who, within the last ten years or so, had at one period or another played a leading role in the industry. At one time or another within the last two years, most of them had either been part of the League or very close to it. And here they sat in the back of the hall, apparently having no formal influence upon the proceedings, yet constantly being turned to by those on the floor. These men could find no place in the "third period" scheme of organization-

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