

The International Opposition Conference

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ages of its position. By its possession of a powerful press, telegraph, radio, and the like, it systematically falsified for years the Oppositionist's point of view, making it responsible at every turn for Centrism's own yesterdays. By injecting an unprecedented confusion in the ranks of Communism, it attained its immediate aim—but at the enormous cost of weakening the Marxist wing in the International.

The Origin of the Opposition

In examining its present condition, the Opposition could not forget its own origin. It arose in the Soviet Union. From the beginning, all its acts and words were limited by the exceptional conditions of the proletarian dictatorship and subsequently by the regime of bureaucratic strangulation of the Party. The views of the Russian Opposition penetrated abroad only episodically, a fact which alone made difficult the creation of a common ideological foundation. Furthermore, since the Russian Opposition directed its course of redressment of the Party line without splits or convulsions dangerous for the dictatorship, the Communist Left in the capitalist countries was necessarily obliged to an extreme restraint. But the Centrist bureaucracy chose the path of smashing the Opposition organizationally. Always at the price of strangling the Party.

The crushing of Party democracy in the U. S. U., as well as throughout the Comintern, violently retarded the development and education of the cadres of the Opposition. The theoretical work of the Opposition, its analyses, its valuation of conditions, its predictions and its slogans thus remained the property of comparatively small circles. To this day, the official Party and the Right wing press can ascribe the most outrageous ideas to the Opposition simply because our real point of view has been so ruthlessly suppressed. The absence of numerous cadres capable of actively advocating our ideas in all branches of the labor movement, greatly facilitated in its turn, the hunting down of the Opposition by the apparatus.

Without these broad cadres and close international connections, the Opposition dispersed national groups of a propagandist nature. Every one was condemned to seek its own way by its own isolated means. In that already lay the danger of discord, of vacillation, of false ideas, and national limitedness.

To this must be added another fact. At each of its turns, Centrism drove out of the Comintern elements of a very diverse, and frequently, opposed character. They usually counted themselves or were counted among the Opposition. A number of them systematically compromised the banner of the Opposition through manifestations of opportunism, anarcho-syndicalism and petty bourgeois dilletantism. It is enough to name the Urbahns group which brought us the greatest damage by declaring its own all the caricatured ideas which Stalin maliciously attributed to the Left Opposition. In France there were a number of such groups deforming the views of the Opposition. In many countries, the course of the struggle showed that it was not so difficult to proclaim oneself for a revolutionary course in China, or in Russia, or in some other distant land, and pursue, under such a cover, a more or less opportunist course at home. Such a danger still exists and can be observed in one manner or another in most countries.

The same conditions, therefore, which determined the appearance of the Opposition as a political factor, also made for its weakening in the first years. There is no need to conceal this fact, for the camouflage policy of imitating the possession of power instead of really fighting for it is a contemptible one: we do not call ourselves the "majority group of the Communist Party" when we are but a small faction in it.

Our Recent Successes

Nevertheless, there is very reason to register very substantial successes in the recent period. These were brought out in the reports made by the delegates from every country represented at the confer-

ence. The period was largely devoted to a necessary ideological delimitation, to the purification of our ranks and our minds—generally necessary in a proletarian party and a dozen times more imperative in a faction of a party. In some cases this work led to splits and seemingly to our weakening. But in reality, aiming at quality, this work prepared for us the possibilities of gaining quantitative successes in the immediate future.

In France, the appearance of La Verite and the transformation of La Lutte de Classes into a theoretical monthly, marked a milestone in the development of the French Opposition. While the writer was in France, the loosely-organized movement was coordinated and the Communist League of France (Opposition) constituted. There our influence is steadily mounting, under the direction of an excellent group of militants whose influence in the Party and the trade unions is palpably increasing. Guided by our comrades, there is being

formed a substantial fraction in the Red trade union center (C. G. T. U.) which fights the stupid policies of the Party leadership as vigorously as it combats the liquidationist tendencies represented by the Right wing—"pure" syndicalist minority in the unions. Such a trade union group is a pressing need in the United States too.

In Germany, the last year was one of deep internal struggle which ended with the inevitable split of the Leninbund. This prepared the fusion of the Marxist section of the Leninbund with the Wedding and Palatine Opposition, and the creation of an organ which will represent the genuine opinions of the Communist Left. Relieved now of the confusionism of Urbahns, the German Left has every opportunity for rapid growth. Its unity conference on March 30 was already a demonstration of this fact. Despite the difficulties unavoidably present in combining two groups with diverse lines of past development, one could see the rise of a movement that will swiftly

A Telegram to Comrade Leon Trotsky

The first international meeting of the Left Communist Opposition, held in Paris on April 6, composed of German, American, Belgian, Spanish, French, Hungarian, Italian and Czechoslovakian delegates, sends its warmest greetings and the mark of its closest solidarity to the Bolshevik comrades, imprisoned and deported, and to their exiled leader, L. D. Trotsky.

The Marine Workers Convention

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al things which brings Mink to the top for their brief moment of authority.

One all-prevailing concept that was evidenced in the utterances of every Party spokesman at the convention was that the organization needed nursing and the Party bureaucrats were there to furnish it. When the question of adopting the constitution came up, every objection was answered with: "We'll take care of that in the future!" or words to that effect. When the problem of control of the national committee arose, it too was answered by the usual: "We'll leave it to the incoming committee."

The Ship Councils Idea

A word in relation to this is quite important. The question of shop councils are quite all right in a basic stable industry as a means of coordinating the work of a center with the smaller units. But in the marine industry, where crews manning a vessel are changed almost monthly, it is wrong as the only form of organization. Today a crew might man a vessel in New York; tomorrow, the same crew might be divided between all the ports from Shanghai to Marseilles. Therefore, the possibilities of coordinating or checking the work of the center with such an organization is out of the question. This creates a very "convenient" leading committee, all sufficient independent of rank and file control, and self-perpetuating, if it wishes.

The next proposition was one of finance, which men from the floor pointed out was essential to a self-sustaining organization, only to have the wet nurse, Johnstone, once more tell them of the terrible difficulties, financial and otherwise, that they must face. Even to dream of a self-sustaining movement was out of the question! Once more posing the proposition of the T. U. U. L.'s rigid wardship.

The third important matter was the question of sectional organization. The T. U. U. L. representative, in order to facilitate the understanding the Daily Worker readers and the Moscow bureaucrats, proposed a form of organization that would be quite familiar to all of them: Negro section, Youth section, and... a Women's section. This last "section" was too much for some of the delegates.

The convention adjourned without having accomplished a single concrete task—and this is all the more criminal con-

sidering the opportunity given the convention directors by the excellent representation from every port of consequence. No national committee was elected. The constitution and its amendments were referred to the incoming committee which was not elected. The selection of the national committee (provisional, if you please) was turned over bag and boots to the national committee of the T. U. U. L., where the seamen delegates who thought they might suggest its composition, could never have anything to do with it. The question of a secretary so important in face of the almost universal opposition to Mink, was also left for "future consideration", which means Mink again. Along with this the question of the editorship of the Marine Workers' Voice, was also left hanging, which means Hines and what Hines stands for—or rather what he doesn't stand for.

Stalinists Endanger the Movement

A splendid start was made. A good basis was at hand. But the great Party "thinkers" did their best to stifle it from the word go. The "danger" of real initiative, of authoritative leadership springing from the ranks and from the struggle, will surely be "combated" by the Party brain batteries: the convention showed that. These people are so uncertain of their own ability to lead, founded upon intelligence and capacity, that they fear to let a single organizational thread out of their hands. It was apparent that there was more insight and ability on the floor of the convention, regarding the problems of the militant seamen and the way to solve them, than there was in the whole Party fraction.

The basis for growth and progress is still at hand. The new movement can become a real power. But the Party "specialists" must change their narrow, stalling course, which will inevitably reduce the new marine union into the horrid caricature that has been made, for instance, of the National Miners Union. The militants in the marine industry will enter into this new movement with all the greater energy because the enormous possibilities are threatened from the start by the cheap machinations of a bureaucratic clique.

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Elated because he had at last found a job after a year's unemployment, Tony Santonostos returned to his home in Staten Island to find his three children dead by gas and his wife nearly asphyxiated. She had turned on the gas after a long and futile struggle to feed her children.

encompass the genuine Marxist elements within and without the official Party.

Our most sensational success has been in Spain. The Spanish Opposition has been transformed from a number of isolated groups living in enforced exile in France, Belgium and Luxemburg, into a powerful factor in the Spanish movement. Following the fall of Primo de Rivera, it was able to win over—in an amazingly brief period—the most decisive sections of the official Party and regroup those workers who had left it. The strongest Party districts are already with us, and the work has only been started.

In Czechoslovakia a firm group has been formed which is preparing to issue its own journal and re-establish a Marxist center in the country. There the policies of Stalinism have borne ripe—rotten ripe—fruit, because they have enabled the Right wing to gain the support of thousands of Czechoslovakia's best proletarian elements. The struggle will cut like a knife into their ranks, however, and turn the current in the other direction.

In China, where the Communist Party was decimated by Chiang Kai-Shek, assisted by Stalin, Bucharin and Martinov, the Opposition has found deep roots. Under indescribably difficult conditions, our comrades have assembled a powerful kernel of revolutionists who are preparing for the inevitable, third Chinese revolution. Their writings and deeds already show a Marxist profundity and keenness that is enviable. Their contribution to our movement is and will be immense.

In the Argentine, in Mexico, in South Africa, among the Indo-Chinese militants, the Opposition is beginning to make its way, even over the obstacles of distance and the years of falsification of the Stalinist apparatus. In the United States and Canada, where the Opposition was formed only after the Sixth Congress, we already form Opposition, and a decisive element in the one of the most important sections of the life of the movement, both in the Party and in the general Left wing.

But it is impossible not to note that in Belgium and Austria, two countries where the social democracy is particularly strong, and official Communism can show nothing but mistakes, defeats and impotence, the Opposition has not made any noticeable progress in the last period. The causes for this must be reserved for another occasion. The international Opposition, however, a source of strength for every national organization, will be of immeasurable aid to these two movements especially.

Towards an International Congress

The Paris Conference decided upon the convocation of an international Congress of an international Congress of the Left Opposition in the near future. The period in between will be devoted to an exhaustive preliminary discussion that will bring the confident clarity necessary for the Congress to adopt the long-needed international Platform of the Opposition. The Bulletin of the Secretariat will be largely devoted to this task, and our American group must collaborate in its solution to the maximum of its ability. Our internationalism, unlike that of the Right wing, is not of the platonic, politely friendly kind which obligates us to nothing but the use of the word, and an exchange of meaningless courteous correspondence and visits. It is, on the contrary, the very essence of our whole life and movement the mainspring of our political conceptions.

The corrupted apparatus, which has systematically undermined the foundations and the prestige of the Communist International, will shout itself hoarse with accusations about a "Fourth International". But that will only frighten infants and old women. We are reassembling the foundation stones of our International. We are cementing them with a renewed solidarity. We are defending the structure with the imposing armory of weapons inherited from Marx and Lenin. We will hold it against the rude and disloyal attacks of the usurpers whose name is Stalin. Let the bought writers, speakers and executioners of the ruling regime continue yet for a while to poison the atmosphere of the struggle. We bring a strength and light into the movement that will pierce the fog and reveal the future that belongs to us.

MAX SHACHTMAN