

An Open Letter to the Members of the C. P. S. U. (b)

(Continued from Last Issue)

The Position of the Left Wing

The break between the epigones of the leadership and the Leninist tradition presents itself under a well-defined form of organization: all the cadres which participated in the building of the Comintern and presided over its leadership in the period of the first four Congresses are not only thrown out of the leadership, but in their overwhelming majority excluded from the ranks of official Communism. This fact alone suffices to denounce the whole abyss that has been created between today and the revolutionary past. The new "theory", the new policy and the new regime have acquired new people. It must be said openly to the workers: at the hour of danger, at the moment of decisive combat, the revolutionary inconsistency of the apparatus of the C. I. will become strikingly obvious to all. Irresponsible subalterns, always ready to accommodate themselves to each new leadership, have never been capable of leading the assault against the ruling classes.

The Left wing (Bolshevik-Leninists) whose spirit of clear-sighted criticism and slogans have been entirely confirmed from the point of view of the internal development of the U. S. S. R. as well as the situation on the international arena, is submitted to the vilest offensive. Nevertheless, and in spite of all the lies of the official press, the Left Opposition grows in numbers and is being fortified ideologically in the whole world.

The progress has been great especially this last year. The press of the Left Opposition in Europe, in America and in Asia constitutes at the present time the only serious Bolshevik-Marxist press, analyzing events, drawing the conclusions, proceeding to the formation of new cadres and preparing the regeneration of the Communist International.

In every country, the Left Opposition has put out of its ranks all those who, under cover of its banner, endeavored to dissimulate their spirit of opportunism, their petty bourgeois dilettantism or their half-anarchist hostility to the country of the proletarian dictatorship.

In spite of all the calumnies of the official press, the international Left Opposition remains unshakably faithful to the October revolution and the Soviet State.

The false friends whom the Soviet bureaucracy draws to itself by means of concessions or alms—these Purcells, Fimzens and Barbusses of all countries—are all very good for anniversary "festivals" but not for the revolutionary struggle. The Opposition is an ideological selection which the persecutions and the fury to which it has been exposed has hardened. At the serious moment it will be found in the front lines.

The Role of the Social Democracy

The Russian Mensheviks, the Social-Revolutionaries and other groupings reduced to nothing at the same time as the bourgeoisie, anxiously scent the crisis, hoping to rise again out of the void. The "democratic" scoundrels of the exploiting classes think to find their rebirth in the fall of the Soviet power which they await impatiently. In reality, the fall of the dictatorship of the proletariat would signify the opening of a long period of civil wars for many years, with sporadic attempts at impotent Bonapartist dictatorship in various corners of the country, in the Chinese or Deniken manner, with the inevitable consequence of the arrest of economic and cultural development for many years. The way out of all this chaos could not be in the sense of a democracy—this political form being least likely in Russia, given the structure and historical past of the land—but much rather under the form of colonial subjugation or of a new October revolution.

The international social democracy does not want to and cannot take into account the economic and cultural expansion of the October revolution, whose creative force in every field is without equal in any known historical regime. All the dangers of the present moment whose source lies in the great betrayal by the social democracy which submits deliberately to capitalism, all the mistakes of the Stalinist leadership, cannot for a single instant obscure the fact that thanks to the proletarian char-

acter of the State, we have been able to attain a tempo of economic development that capitalism has never known. The very possibility of experiences in the form of plans and of collectivization, with all their contradictions and errors, constitutes a gigantic acquisition for all of humanity. Can they be compared for an instant with such "errors" as the patriotic participation of the social democracy in the imperialist slaughter or the present disgusting game of Mueller and MacDonald who crawl about in search of a recipe for the rejuvenation of capitalism?

The conquests of the October revolution show the incalculable possibilities that could be attained by Europe and humanity as a whole if the social democracy of Germany, England and other countries where it can formally become a majority (if it should "want" it, that is, if it should formulate a proletarian program) were to inscribe on the order of the day a socialist reconstruction of relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of an indissoluble collaboration.

Against "Socialist" Treachery

But that is out of the question, for the social democracy constitutes the "democratic" basis of capitalist conservatism and is the penultimate resource of a society based upon exploitation. The ultimate resource will be fascism.

The social democratic "criticism" of the Soviet regime is like the cry of the night-watchman: it is destined to maintain the tranquillity of the propertied and to guarantee them peaceful slumber. To fight against the dictatorship of the proletariat, the social democracy utilizes the difficulties that it has itself created for the Soviet Union, augmented by those the leadership has caused. If, in relation to the capitalist world, the social democracy plays a role of protection towards the U.S.S.R., its aim bears a character of restoration. The struggle for "democracy" and "liberties" in the very sphere of world imperialism, one of whose guardians the social democracy has made itself, really signifies the struggle for the re-establishment of capitalism. Only thus the question is important. It indicates that to the extent that the crisis becomes graver, the more implacable will become our struggle against all the democratic agents of the restoration no matter who they are. At the same time, the further we go the more clearly we see that Communism cannot fight victoriously against the social democracy except on the road marked out by the Opposition.

The Party is the supreme political weapon. It is in the Party that the possibilities of the revolution and its future are embodied. But it is from this very source that the dangers proceed today. The adventurism of the bureaucracy does not halt with the destiny of the Party. Parallel to the generalized collectivization there takes place the generalized registry of factories and trades in the Party. This means nothing less than the dissolution of the Party into the class, that is, in reality the suppression of the Party. In this way, the bureaucratic apparatus acquires more extended power of oppression.

Its follies do not encounter the resistance of any criticism, neither correctives nor reactions, so long as life does not set itself to reply to them violently. The first warning of this kind has just been given. Everything leads to the belief that the subsequent one will be much more peremptory than all the preceding ones.

The country, even though not very distinctly, is taking this into account very profoundly. Naturally, each class in its own way. A dull uneasiness reigns in the Party. But the order that prevails in the Party is such that nobody would dare to express his fear aloud, nor even to put a question. The regime of "self-criticism" in its new stage consists of the obligation for each and every one to subscribe not only to the precision but also to the "genius" of the leadership and to hound those whom the leadership orders to hound.

Stalin's Victory over the Party

It is evident from this that the "victory" of the Stalinist bureaucracy over the Opposition was at the same time a victory over the Party. This process coincides with the withering away of a whole section of revolutionists, with the growth of bureaucracy and of the petty bourgeoisie in

the U. S. S. R., with the strengthening of the capitalist reaction and the social democracy in the whole world, with the defeat of the revolutionary movements, with the weakening of the positions of Communism and the strengthening of opportunist tendencies in its ranks.

The crisis in grain provisioning of 1927-28 having led it to a blind alley the Stalinist apparatus abruptly reversed its positions and entered into struggle against a part of the petty bourgeois forces with whose aid it has set upon the Left wing. Without the slightest hesitation, the Opposition subscribed to this turn about face and declared itself ready to support in full the leadership in any of its move orientated in the sense of a revolutionary policy and a cleansing of the regime within the Party.

But it is now incontestable that the swing to the Left in 1928, constituting a particularly brutal zig-zag, did not result in a new course. It could not result in one, since it was not accompanied by an ideological regeneration of the Party. Nothing has changed: there is still the same miserable and eclectic porridge instead of a living theory; still the same bureaucratic-functionary selection of the personnel, only much narrower; still the same methods of mechanization pushed to the highest degree.

The program of the administrative liquidation of a class is in actuality no less disastrous in the political field than was the scandalous report of Stalin to the conference of Marxist-Agronomists in the field of theory. It is not conceivable that there are not in Lenin's Party thousands upon thousands of people in whose mind the politics and the theory of Stalin does not sow uneasiness and indignation. Nevertheless there was no protest at all. Nobody dared to reply, while in the press the latest brood of reptiles set about to develop the ideas of this illiterate report as being the latest revelation of historical thought.

The leading Stalinist group has arrogated the power in its most cynical form. That is precisely why its supreme point of victory—the moment when the "leaders" of the Right wing capitulated—was at the same time the point of departure for a decrease of its domination over the Party. The coronation of the infallible leadership was judged necessary at the moment when this same leadership felt itself on the eve of bankruptcy.

The Party leads an ever more, ghostly existence. Stalin is much more revoltingly impudent with the Congresses than was the Czar towards the Duma.

Furthermore, on the very inside of the schematic cadres of the Russian Communist Party there are tens of thousands of revolutionary proletarians who can and will become the creative forces in the rebirth of the Party. It is to this nucleus that we attach the destinies of our group.

Conditions of the Opposition Cadres

The circumstances under which the cadres of the Opposition find themselves placed are without example in the history of the revolutionary movement. The harsh material conditions of deportation are aggravated by the application of complete political isolation. The complicated system of State and private measures of order is especially intended to sap the health of the deportees. At the same time the official press brings the Oppositionist relegated to a forsaken spot, triumphant information on the progress of the collectivization, of the industrialization, and on the uninterrupted victories of the Communist Parties throughout the world.

Certain of the isolated and weaker elements do not resist this pressure. But the majority of the capitulations are obviously simulated: broken and exhausted, they sign what they have no belief in. A new series of capitulations is being prepared for the Sixteenth Congress, proceeding from furtive negotiations followed by secret agreements behind the scenes. This sort of stage-play is one of the most disgusting manifestations of revolutionary exhaustion and moral decay. The pathetic invocation of the so-called need of "returning" to the Party betokens only cynicism toward that same Party. For can the Party be served by deception and falsehood? That is why the most "eminent" capitulators are immediately transformed into political cadavers left unburied, while the expelled and

hunted Opposition remains an active factor in the life of the Soviet republic and the Communist International.

After all there is nothing very astonishing in this. The innumerable books and pamphlets against the Opposition published since 1923, the special collections of quotations intended for Congresses and Conferences, the collections against "Trotskyism", etc... are today the most convincing proof in favor of the Opposition. We keep our Platform in reserve. They fear it mortally, while seeking to assail it by means of provocative polemics. Yet today as yesterday, the whole ideological life of the Party turns around the Oppositionist Platform as around a pivot.

The declaration of comrade Rakovsky, supported by the fundamental cadres of the Opposition, was an application of the united front towards the Party.

The Centrist leadership replied to it by sharpening the rigors of repression. The Opposition having sincerely proposed to attenuate the rigidity of organization of its struggle for a purely Marxist line, the apparatus replied by having Blumkin shot. We must say it openly to the Party and to the working class. We must explain the import of our proposal, name those responsible for its defeat, and proclaim our indelible determination to fight for our opinion and to increase two-fold, five-fold, ten-fold our efforts towards consolidating the Bolshevik Leninist fraction. In that alone can loyalty to the October revolution be manifested today.

A French proverb says that one must know how to fall back sometimes in order the better to leap. That is the condition in which the leadership of the Soviet state, as well as the leadership of the Communist International finds itself at present.

Both are driven by their own adventurism to the depths of an impasse. Placing its "prestige" above the interests of the world revolution, the Centrist bureaucracy draws ever more the noose around the neck of the Party. In matters of tactics, the first task is the following: to beat a retreat by abandoning the positions of adventurism. The retreat is inevitable in any case. It must therefore be carried out as soon as possible and in the best possible order.

(To Be Continued)

A Tribute From a So. African Militant

Cape Town, South Africa

Dear Comrades:

It was with great joy that I received from comrade Glass of Johannesburg the first few copies of the Militant followed a while later by a complete file which you sent him and which I have eagerly read.

As a theorist of Marxist-Leninism as a proletarian strategist, as the embodiment of proletarian sagacity and courage and honesty, as a master of lucid exposition and vivid prose Trotsky is unequalled in the workers' movement. And if the American comrades of the Opposition had done nothing in the past for the movement (and they have—their records are great), and if they should do little in the future (which is extremely unlikely), they yet will deserve and obtain the deep gratitude of all honest Communists for making available in English the writing of the leader of the world Opposition.

Comrade Glass and myself were amongst the small band of comrades in South Africa who from the very first, gave adherence to the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky and took an active part in the publication of the Bolshevik, a monthly journal, at the Cape. Comrade Glass, I believe, has given you an account of the position in the South African Union and I will not dwell on it here save to state that under the leadership of a Stalinized Comintern, the gospel of Marcus Garvey is written large in the platform of the South African Communist Party.

I enclose a donation of ten shillings towards the sustaining fund of the Militant and will endeavour to make it a monthly donation. Wishing you the very best of luck in your splendid work for the cause, I remain

Yours for Communism,
—MANUEL LOPES