

# The International Conference of the Rights

BY KURT LANDAN

In the middle of December, representatives of the German, Swedish, Czechoslovakian, Alsatian and probably several other Right wing opposition groups met in a conference held at Berlin, in order to create an "International Communist Opposition".

The "managers" of this "International" called by Brandler, whose theoretical pillars are M. N. Roy and A. Thalheimer, seemed at first ill at ease. Instead of making known the fundamental lines of their program, *International News* (No. 9, 1930), the international information bulletin of the Rights publishes an article of embarrassed defense to prove that the "International" of the Rights is a unity that has grown up organically and "that it does not at all signify, as Trotsky and the Trotskyites contend, reciprocal tolerance of opportunist horse deals."

And Thalheimer—the style as well as the content betray the pen of the master—after using the example of the "Brunn opposition" in attempting to prove that the organic unity of the international Right would itself painlessly of opportunist deviations, observes with great satisfaction: "What put the Trotsky Opposition on its feet is a caricature of the methods of the C. I. leadership, pushed to their extreme: it is the replacement of the C. I. Executive by a counter Executive limiting itself to the person of Trotsky and functioning in the manner of a sect leadership." This justifies the existence of the new "International".

## Is There An International Right Opposition?

Thalheimer answers in the affirmative. He attempts to prove that the national Right wing groups have a common estimation of the situation, of the methods and objectives of struggle. Unfortunately, he forgets to say on this occasion that besides this general agreement, there exist nevertheless "little differences". Thus, the American Rights think that the resolutions of the 6th World Congress of the C. I. are correct, but "merely" wrongly applied: while for the European Rights the decline of the C. I. begins with the Sixth Congress itself. As you see, the beauty of the Right "International" is its little defects.

Other matters deserve a certain amount of our attention. While in Germany a violent struggle is being carried on against the so-called "legend of the October of 1923"; while Brandler, Thalheimer, Frölich and Walcher constantly seek to prove that the revolution was impossible in 1923 and that the Brandler C. E. C. saved the German party precisely by not attempting that which was objectively impossible, the theoretical brain of the Right "International", M. N. Roy is of an entirely different opinion when he writes:

"If a wrong leadership was the cause of the defeat, then the German comrades cannot alone be held responsible" (*Gegen den Strom*, No. 50, 1929. Emphasis mine—K. L.)

Of course, the Right wingers of all countries have numerous common traits. In France, these respectable gentlemen the municipal councillors of the Workers' and Peasants' Party reject the policy of Cachin, Semard and Monmousseau. The same holds true in Alsace. This rejection of the policies of the C. I. is common to all Right wingers. Only in the reasons which they give is there a slight distinction. Brandler, for example, rejects Thälmann for his nationalist deviations, while Mourer and Hueber condemn Doriot and Baron for putting obstacles in the way of "the defense of the fatherland and the rights of the Alsatian people". This much can be recognized: the organic agreements consist of a common rejection of the policies of the C. I. and not in common conceptions of a Communist policy that can be counterposed to that of Centrism.

But it is not in the questions of which they speak but in those that they keep silent on, that the nationally limited spirit of the Right wingers expresses itself most strongly. This is especially valid insofar as the fundamental problems of the Russian revolution, in the post-Leninist period are concerned. The reasons why we take a stand toward these questions with an ever greater emphasis and why we see in the problems of the proletarian dictatorship in the U. S. S. R. the fundamental problems of the Communist movement in general are the same as those which led Marx to attach so great an importance to the Paris Commune, and to draw from the experiences the necessary conclusions for the strategy of the proletarian revolution.

A Communist group, which of its own volition refuses to broach the problems of the Russian revolution, and which restricts itself to declaring "that the other sections of the International do not want to interfere within the internal and external activities of the Russian C. P. because they are

not sufficiently competent to do so" (Roy), raises in this manner its spirit of national limitedness to the degree of a principle.

This national limitedness naturally leads to a degeneration of the Right wing cadres which have not broken subjectively with Communism. This holds true especially for the working class cadres of the German Rights, which have been raised in the spirit of an "autonomous" German Communism. In contradistinction to the French Rights, the Brandlerites do not reject the fundamental theoretical principles of Marxism-Leninism. However, they too lead, by their latest course of development, to an unbridgeable contradiction on the subject of these principles. The point of departure of this inevitable development is their "dualism", the division of the world and the C. I. according to the following point of view: the Soviet Union can build up socialism without being affected by international capitalism. And that is not meant only objectively, but by the course pursued at present, for "the same people who are responsible for the introduction of so many false conceptions in the C. I. follow in Russian affairs a line that is, as a whole, correct" (Roy). This division of the C. I. into a Russian wing that is conducted correctly and an international wing that is conducted wrongly, is not accidental, but is the expression of the theory of socialism in one country extended to its extreme by Thalheimer. While Lenin taught that the Soviet Union cannot detach itself from the entity of the world market that it is, in a certain sense bound to it and that for example, the relation between the domestic prices and the world market is of primary importance for the decisive struggle between the two absolutely hostile social systems—socialism and capitalism—Thalheimer teaches us that there is "no sense" in speaking of the in-

terdependence (Thalheimer says: unity) between the development of the Soviet Union and that of the capitalist world. Since such a dependence does not exist according to Thalheimer and Roy, objectively there does not exist, according to Thalheimer, any connection between the Russian and the C. I. policies of the Stalinist régime.

But since the facts of the crisis in the Russian C. P. and in the C. I. cannot be denied by Thalheimer himself, he is forced to take another step on the road of dualism: the schema of the Russian revolution cannot be applied to Germany, which has an entirely different substance. And since each revolution has its own laws, its own schema, the wisdom of Roy, according to whom the lack of "competence" forbids the different sections to interfere in the problems of the others, is fully confirmed. National limitedness has so to speak, found its "theoretical expression".

Is the existence of a crisis in the heart of the Russian C. P. and the C. I. then simply accidental? No, it is due to the fact that it is artificially transferred from the Russian C. P. into the C. I., think the theoreticians of national limitedness.

Fighting in defense of his correct line against the more or less false (occasionally they also say: counter-revolutionary) conceptions of Trotskyism, Stalin, according to them, transfers the schema of the Russian revolution and all of its problems to the C. I., altogether unable to recognize the fact that if a Right wing and a Left wing exist in the Soviet Union, it does not necessarily follow that the same must take place in the C. I.

The historic fact that on the trail of the temporary stabilization of the capitalist system, there followed not only a wave of reaction, that swept over Europe, but also an era of political and social reaction, that settled on the territory of the proletarian

dictatorship—the spokesmen of the new "dualism" do not recognize at all.

How can they then understand that the domination of Centrism in the Russian C. P. and in the C. I. is only a reflection of these real phenomena, how can they understand that they themselves, their ideology and their inability to detach themselves from the questions and the methods of yesterday only mirror the pressure that the elements of stabilization brought upon the revolutionary party. How can they recognize the fact that this differentiation must reveal itself most strongly in the Russian party, which, being the party of the proletarian dictatorship, must of necessity assume the character of a monopoly. Is it not deplorable to see Roy end up by wanting to prove that in the proletarian party there cannot, in principle, be any place for the birth of ideas unique to the enemy class?

"But the proletariat is so clearly separated from all other classes (the demarcation is more clear in one case than in another) that in its party there is no place for representatives of other classes, with the exception of adventurers and provocateurs. That is why the differences of opinion inside the Communist party do not signify a clash of different class interests." (*Gegen den Strom*, No. 46—Nov. 16, 1929.)

The Right wing Opposition is international. As international as the conditions themselves that have produced it. But there is no International Right Opposition. There is only the sum of the various national Right wingers, confined by the narrow national problems of each country. They do not represent the party of tomorrow, which will surmount the crisis and which, under the pressure of the Left, will find its path in the rising wave of the revolution. They represent the party of yesterday, a definite period in its development which the party has overcome. In Germany, the type of the Rights is most strongly developed. There the specific traits manifest themselves most clearly. It was there, also, that history once (1923) put them to the test—and they failed.

Berlin, January 1931.

## Results of the Minneapolis Special Election

MINNEAPOLIS:—

The death of John Ryan, for years Street Car Co. boss of the First Ward, presented an opportunity to the Communist movement. The First ward is seven-eighths proletarian. Consisting mostly of Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Italians and some Irish, it is the stronghold of Catholic reaction. It has, therefore, been the stamping ground for the most reactionary politicians on practically every major issue. It is easy to explain why this ward has been a hard nut to crack for the Communists.

Came hard times, unemployment, soup kitchens, evictions and such. Many a loyal church member began to question the ability of the Holy Trinity to do anything in this crisis. In general a breaking away from the conservative traditions can be seen in recent times, on the part of the workers of this section of town. The election of a Farmer-Laborite to office is an indication of this trend.

Certainly this is an excellent field for spreading the Communist message. So we went to the Communist party members. Will the party put up a candidate in this special election? No. The party members were told that the party could not afford a campaign at present, and besides this was an unimportant election. The main election, they said, would be the city-wide election in the spring. We urged the party comrades to put up a candidate, promising our support, especially since the Farmer-Labor party had filed a candidate. But they told us this question was already settled.

We could not agree that the Farmer Labor party should go unchallenged in this proletarian ward. Furthermore, of the 11 candidates filed, there was no representative of organized labor, no spokesman of the working class.

Our executive committee consequently filed comrade John Brinda for Alderman. Comrade Brinda is a member of the Upholsterers Union and well known in the city and ward as organizer and leader of the Brooks Parlor Furniture strike. He joined the Communist League some time after the strike as a direct result of the participation of the Communists in that strike.

We issued 10,000 leaflets dynamically portraying the issues of the election: the misery of the unemployed, their families and children, the hypocrisy and corruption of the Community Fund and other charity agencies, the false promises of the bosses and their servants in office; and calling upon the workers to support the whole Communist program: the ultimate as well as the immediate demands. We called for the establishment of Unemployed Committees who would be empowered to requisition suitable vacant buildings for administration

of relief; \$50,000 from the Community Fund for these committees; No evictions for non-payment of rent; free milk and food for all unemployed workers' children; no discrimination against foreign-born or non-citizens in city work; no private employment agencies, this work to be handled by the Unemployed Committees and the Unions.

We called for a bold and energetic fight for these proposals. At the same time we stated that "Every worker must be made to understand that under the capitalist system there is no permanent solution" and we brought forward the slogan "ORGANIZE—FOR THE OVERTHROW OF CAPITALISM!"

The party bureaucrats learned of our campaign only two days before the primary elections. I can imagine Karl Reeve's rage and anxiety for his job when he "discovered" our campaign. What "deviations" would the C. E. C. now find in his criminal neglect in not filing a candidate! Desperate, but not to be outdone, he issued a last-minute frenzied leaflet, throwing logic and responsibility to the winds, denounced Brinda as a "traitor of the working class, and an agent of the bosses."

Comrades throughout the country are familiar with the careless and irresponsible statements made by the party officials in their hateful attacks on the Left Opposition. But I should like here to enumerate a few typical misstatements of fact used to deceive militant workers.

1. "The Trotskyites make alliances with the Farmer-Labor Party." Any worker who reads the *Militant*, or followed our campaign against the Farmer-Labor Party last summer on the streets of Minneapolis knows this is a lie. Furthermore, our candidate ran AGAINST the Farmer-Labor candidate (Kauth) while the party did not see fit to file against him. Reeve's attack on the Left Opposition therefor was an AID to the Farmer-Labor Party. Party comrades should think this over carefully.

2. "John Brinda poses as a Communist." He is a member of the Communist League of America (Opposition). No pose is necessary.

3. "He was thrown out of the Communist party." Brinda never was a member of the Communist party.

4. "He is a traitor and proven enemy of the working class." Try to convince his militant fellow-workers who know him, especially the Brooks strikers.

6. "The Communist party denounces this candidate as a fraud and an agent of the bosses of this city to confuse the workers and lead them away from a real struggle for immediate relief." (Emphasis in this original).

The broadcasting of this scurrilous literature caused large numbers of Left work-

ers to vote for the Farmer-Labor party, or, in disgust, to abstain altogether. The result is a low rate for Communism. Because of the division in the ranks of Communism, Brinda's vote was cut in two or three. He received 86 votes, while the winner, Kauth (finally elected) received in the 800's. The other eight candidates ranged from 100 to 600. One candidate received 50. The party "sticker" candidate was not recorded.

In this coming city elections, we hope the Communist party will file a full slate of candidates. It has been our established policy in the interest of Communist unity, always to support the Communist party where it has candidates, and conduct a campaign for them on our own platform.

More sympathizers are coming to our aid and helping to lighten our financial burdens. In this connection the Communist League of Minneapolis wishes to express its appreciation to the following, who helped to defray the expenses in the First Ward Campaign. (Those who requested their names be withheld are marked "Anon"):

Anon, \$10.00; C. Skoglund, \$1.00; J. Lebedoff, \$1.00; I. Saffrin, \$1.00; Sam Lessin, \$1.00; F. Glaser, \$2.00; Dr. J. Kurtz, \$2.00; V. R. Dunne, \$2.50; 5 Anon (\$1ea.), \$5.00; F. A. Wise, \$1.00; L. B. Bortnick, \$1.00; I. Elkin, \$.50; Anon, \$.50; Anon, \$2.00.

## 10 Red Needle Workers

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liquidators of the Lovestone camp, we propose to the worker-members of the party to march together with the workers of the Opposition to strengthen the Left wing and Communism. We are convinced that this united front, based not upon a submerging of principle differences, but upon the acute need of the day, will produce highly beneficial results for the movement as a whole. Those leaders who oppose this united front of the Communist workers are standing in the way of the progress of the movement. Here too we are convinced that the party members will measure up to the task, and, actuated by their devotion to the cause, will know how to act.

Against the reactionaries! Against the Levys and their brand of traitors! Against the Right wing liquidators of the Lovestone group!

For a united front of the party members and the Left Opposition!

Forward to the unity and victory of the Left wing!

The Needle Trades Group,  
Communist League of America (Opposition).  
Sylvia Bleeker, Secretary