

EDITORIAL NOTES

ON WHICH SIDE?

The defense of workers under persecution by the state authorities of capitalism for their activity in the labor movement is a class question, and therefore a question of principle. It makes no difference what the opinions or affiliations of the prisoners may be. Blows directed against them are in reality directed against their class. In such an issue there are only two sides, and there is only one question to answer: On which side do you stand?

This question of principle is now coming to the front most insistently in the case of Soderberg, Bunker, and Trajer, the members of the Independent Tidewater Boatmen's Union, who have been selected for victimization in the New York "dynamite plot". In reality the frame-up is directed against their union, and by that fact, against the entire working class. The members of the I. T. B. U. have not been deceived by the attempt to pass off the frame-up as a prosecution of individual "criminals". The union has already taken a decided stand on the case. It has recognized that the fight against the frame-up is a fight for its own existence as an organization and has made the defense of Soderberg, Bunker and Trajer its own. The question now presents itself categorically: For the boat owners, the police, and the agent provocateur on the one side—or, for the Tidewater Boatmen's Union and its persecuted members on the other. An ordinary trade union militant who has been through a few fights with the boss class, to say nothing of an enlightened class-conscious worker, should have no difficulty in deciding where he stands.

As in all anti-labor frame-ups of the past there is a great deal of police propaganda being carried on to beloud the issue and confuse the workers. This propaganda has its unconscious mouthpieces in the labor movement. In the early days of the Mooney case and also in the Sacco-Vanzetti case we saw the same thing. People who are naive enough to believe anything they are told by the frame-up gang withhold their help from the defense. And to these deceived ones must be added those who slander the prisoners at the time of their greatest need in order to cover up and justify their own treachery and cowardice. One of the first tasks in defending workers in a case of this kind is to tear the mask from the face of these camouflaged police agents and show them up in their true light before the workers.

The people who went around whispering that Mooney and Billings were really "guilty", and who did the same thing in regard to Sacco and Vanzetti when the case first broke, have their counterparts in the case of the marine workers now facing trial. This treacherous propaganda was strongest at the moment when the prisoners were first arrested and put through the torture of the third degree, when they appeared to be alone and friendless with no one to speak for them or to help them. But since the defense movement began to take shape, and the union rallied its forces for the fight, the voluntary helpers of the prosecution have begun to beat a retreat. This process will be accelerated as the issue is brought clearly into the open and the honest workers rally around the banner of labor solidarity.

In a previous issue we called attention to the abominable statement of the Daily Worker on the case—the statement poisoned with the spirit of class treachery. Some elements in the I. W. W., whose aim in life is to demonstrate on every occasion that they are just as rotten as the Stalinist bureaucrats, brought out a statement of the same character in the Dec. 1st issue of Industrial Solidarity. But this brought a reaction from the I. W. W. members in New York which is worthy of emulation by the Communist workers in the ranks of the party. Here is a copy of a telegram sent to Industrial Solidarity: "Membership here demands retraction of article signed H. R. pertaining to victims on water front in recent 'Solidarity'. Soderberg, Trajer, and Bunker, have pleaded not guilty. We consider accusation against them an injustice. Non-I. W. W. marine workers' defense committee defending cases should be given support. Letter from victims follows. L. J. Seco, General Executive Board Member."

We also know of the protests that have been made by Party members along the same line against the position taken by the Daily Worker. These are signs that the rank and file militants are going to say their word on this case and that it is going to be in favor of the defendants and not of the prosecution. This is the hope of the imprisoned members of the boatmen union in their desperate trouble. It is also the hope of the militant labor movement.

THE OPPOSITION ON THE EVE OF GREAT ADVANCES

In the beginning of the year that is now drawing to a close the Communist League began an upward swing under the sign of a planned program of expansion. The plan worked out in almost every detail. The reestablishment of the weekly Militant, the organization of our publishing house, the strengthening of full-time staff, the publication of the International in English, the placing of organizers in the field, and the national lecture tour—all these projects of the plan are today a reality. And as a result of these achievements the American section of the Opposition is not exactly the same as it was a year ago—it is stronger in organization, more fortified in principle and more confident of its future. Only one item of the expansion program remains unfulfilled—the theoretical magazine. Our failure by approximately five hundred dollars to collect the estimated two hundred dollar fund compelled us to cross the project off for the time being. In all other respects the program was realized.

In the meantime new developments and new advances—the fruit of our systematic planned work of the year—are crowding upon us unannounced and urging a reorientation of our work with a still broader and more optimistic perspective. The planned program of expansion, besides attaining its immediate objectives, is already beginning to bear fruit in tangible advances which were not planned, nor even hoped for in so short a time. A number of new achievements, which were not directly contemplated, confront us now as imminent realities.

The first of these—first chronologically and first in importance and significance—was the establishment of Young Spartacus, the voice of the Opposition youth, the first youth paper to make its appearance in the entire international organization of the Left Opposition. The founding of Young Spartacus, and simultaneously with it the organization of the Marxian Youth Club under the aegis of the Opposition—these are the true signs of the invincible vitality of the Marxist wing of the movement.

To this will soon be added two more evidences of Opposition progress in other fields. The 15th of December will mark the first appearance of Communists, official organ of the Communist League in the Greek language; and following that, the publication of a Jewish paper is scheduled for January 1st. The enormous significance of these two events needs no elucidation. They are the first concrete indications of the slow but steady growth of our influence among the foreign language elements of the Communist movement. The roots of our movement are spreading wide and going deep. In all these developments we see the proof that the conditions are maturing for a transformation of the form and character of our organization. There is reason to believe that we are on the way toward breaking out of the narrow confines of a purely propaganda body. At any rate we are moving in that direction. That is what these events foreshadow.

But we must see the whole picture, which is by no means a one-sidedly optimistic one. These expanded activities in themselves involve the organization in a crisis which expresses itself most acutely on the financial side. It is a crisis of growth, to be sure, but it effects our work most seriously at the moment just the same. The new advances are well grounded in all the circumstances. They cannot be postponed. But they also impose additional burdens and responsibilities on the still limited number of our supporters. These obligations cannot be postponed either. Everything depends upon our comrades understanding this and meeting it with the necessary additional activity and sacrifice. —J. P. C.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

"What Constitutes A Revolutionary Situation?" by Leon Trotsky.

The Situation in Germany—A Dangerous Strategic Error of the Communist Party—by Erwin Bauer.

Many other special features on events in the American and International labor and Communist movement.

Every intelligent and class-conscious worker wishes to be fully informed on working class developments. The Militant is the best English paper for that purpose. Read and subscribe to The Militant.

EXPIRATION OF SUBSCRIPTION

If the number of your wrapper is 93 or under, your subscription has expired. To ensure that you do not miss a single issue of The Militant, send in your renewal immediately to The Militant, 84 East 10th St., New York, N. Y.

Tasks of the Left Opposition in England and India - Some Critical Remarks on an Unsuccessful Thesis -

Two comrades, Ridley and Chandu Ram, have worked out these, dedicated to the situation in England, the Left Opposition, and its relations to the Comintern. The authors consider themselves supporters of the Left Opposition despite their having serious differences with it. In their document they defend several times, the necessity of an open and free inner criticism. That is absolutely correct. This free and open criticism we will employ, therefore, in relation to their own theses.

1. "Great Britain is at the present time in a transitional phase between Democracy and Fascism". Democracy and Fascism are here considered as two abstractions without any social determinants. Evidently, the authors wish to free her dictatorship from the decomposing parliamentary covering, and to enter upon the path of open and naked violence. In general this is true, but only in general. The present government is not an "Anti-Parliamentary" Government; on the contrary, it has received an unheard of parliamentary support from the "nation". Only the increase of the revolutionary movement in England can force the government to tread the path of naked, ultra-parliamentary violence. This will without doubt take place. But at the present time this is not so. To place today the question of Fascism on the first plane is not here motivated. Even from the standpoint of a distant perspective one can doubt in what measure it is in place to speak of "Fascism" for England. Marxists must, in our opinion, proceed from the idea that fascism represents a different and specific form of the dictatorship of finance-capital, but it is absolutely not identical with the imperialist dictatorship as such. When the "Party" of Mosely and the "Guild of St. Michael" represent the beginnings of fascism, as the thesis declares, it is precisely the total futility of both named groups that shows how unwise it is to reduce already today the whole perspective to the imminent coming of fascism.

The Kerenksy Period for Great Britain

In the analysis of the present situation in England, we should not preclude the variants through which the rule of conservatism will pass, not directly to the dictatorship of open violence, but will put forward, as a result of a swift parliamentary dislocation to the Left, through any block of Henderson and Lloyd George, a transitory government of the British Kerenksyade. Lloyd George counts, manifestly, on the inevitable Left turn, of "open opinion", and, precisely, therefore, does not fear to remain today in a futile minority.\* In what degree the British Kerenksyade is probable, how durable it will be, etc., depends on the further development of the economic crisis, on the tempo of the bankruptcy of the "national" government, and, mainly, upon the speed of the radicalization of the masses.

Obviously, the Kerenksyade, when it appears, must for its own part, uncover its insufficiency and consequently push the bourgeoisie along the road of open and naked violence. In this case, the English workers must convince themselves that their Monarchy is not just an innocent and decorative institution: the King's power will inevitably become the center of the united imperialist counter-revolution.

2. A profound error is to be found in the second paragraph, directed against the activity in the trade unions, with the object of their capture, which for a Marxist and Bolsheviki is obligatory. According to the thought of the thesis, the trade unions from their origin represent "imperialist organizations". They can live so long as they benefit by the super-profits of British capitalism; now, when her privileged position is forever lost, the trade unions can only disappear. To struggle to capture the present trade unions is nonsense. The revolutionary dictatorship will, in the proper time build new "economic organizations".

The British Trade Unions—Their Past and Future

In this judgment there is nothing new. It renews long ago clarified and rejected propositions. The trade unions are not considered by the authors as the historic organization of the British proletariat, which reflects its destiny, but as a creation which from its inception is penetrated with the sin of imperialism. But the trade unions have had their rich and instructive history. They had previously carried on a heroic struggle for the right to organization. They gloriously participated in the Chartist Movement. They led the struggle, for the shorter working day, and these struggles were recognized by Marx and Engels as having great historical importance. A number of trade unions entered the First International. Alas, history does not exist for our authors. In all their opinions, there is not a drop of dialectics. They limit themselves under metaphysical principles: "Fascism", "Democracy", "imperialistic organizations". To the living and real processes they oppose their discoveries.

We hear from them that the leaders of the trade unions did not betray the General Strike of 1926: To acknowledge them as "betrayers" would indicate to acknowledge that they were previously "revolutionary". See what kind of a

\* I have just received the "Demission Letter" of Lloyd George to his parliamentary Party, which totally confirms this supposition.

derby Metaphysics runs. The reformists have not always betrayed the workers. In certain periods and under certain conditions, the reformists carried through some progressive work, insufficient though it be. The epoch of imperialist decline snatches the bottom from under the reformists. That is why the reformists, insofar as they are forced to attach themselves to the movement of the masses, betray it at a certain stage. Even so, the masses accept the conduct of the reformists. To this living conception of the masses, the authors oppose the theory of the original sin of the trade unions. This theory is remarkable in that it does not allow a betrayer to be called a betrayer.

The Road of the Workers Toward Revolution

Since 1920, the trade unions have lost more than 40% of their membership. The authors, therefore, say that in the course of the next two years they will lose another 40%. When these 80% of workers come to Communism, comrades Ridley and Ram can say: the prophet need not go to the mountain when the mountain comes to the prophet. But insofar as we know, this is not so. Ridley and Ram have not a dozen workers behind them. The trade unions still embrace millions of workers who in 1926 demonstrated that they are capable of carrying on a revolutionary struggle. We must look for the workers where they are to be found today, and not where they may be tomorrow—the organized as well as the unorganized. The question does not go so far as the economic organizations which the future revolutionary dictatorship will create, but rather to the present English worker, without whom to speak of the dictatorship of the proletariat signifies playing with phrases.

Can in reality the workers enter the path of the insurrection in one leap, without in the preceding period deepening its struggle against capitalism, without radicalizing themselves, their methods of struggle and their organizations? How can the revolutionization of the working-class take place outside of the trade unions, without reflecting itself inside of the trade unions, without changing its physiognomy, and failing to call forth a selection of new leaders? If it is true, that the trade unions originated on the fundamentals of the capitalist super-profits of Great Britain—and this is so to a limited degree—so, must the destruction of the super-profits radicalize the trade unions, understood, of course, from below and not from above, understood in the struggle against the leaders and traditions. This struggle will be all the more successful if the Communists participate in it.

The authors of the thesis go so far as to identify the struggle for the trade unions with the Anglo-Russian Committee. An overwhelming argument! The Left Opposition accused Stalin, Tomsky and Company that through the political friendship with Citrine, Purcell, Cook, et al, the Communists in the trade unions were hindered from unmasking these traitors. Comrades Ridley and Ram bring forth a new discovery: To unite with the betrayers and to unmask them before the masses—are one and the same thing. Can we take such arguments seriously?

Lenin's Dictum: Work In All Labor Organizations

The American comrade, Glotzer, in speaking of the necessity of working in the trade union organizations for their conquest, appeals in absolute correctness to the pamphlet of Lenin's: "Infantile Sickness of Communism—Leftism". To this comrades Ridley and Ram answer with four objections:

(a) They ask for arguments and do not appeal to authorities. This is true. But the pamphlet of Lenin's contains many arguments which their thesis entirely fails to answer.

(b) The authors deny Roman Catholic dogmas of infallibility. We agree with that. But we counsel them to begin with a criticism of the infallibility of their own gospel.

(c) "Lenin was neither God nor an infallible Pope!" This is a repetition of the preceding argument. Without a Pope, Lenin successfully struggled against Metaphysics and sectarianism.

(d) Lenin wrote in the year 1920; the situation since then has changed considerably. But the authors abstain from explaining in what these changes really consist, aside from considering their allusion to the diminishing membership of the trade unions, which does not have a decisive significance.

We see that the arguments of the authors have an extremely abstract and even a purely formal character. The allusion to the year 1920 is in direct opposition to the fundamental thoughts of the thesis. If the trade unions from their origin were and remain to this day pure imperialist organizations incapable of revolutionary deeds, the allusion to the year 1920 loses all significance. We would have to say simply that the attitude of Marx, Engels and Lenin was false to the roots.

The Left Opposition and the Comintern

(3) The third paragraph is dedicated to the Comintern. The authors stand for the creation of a 4th International, and here too, manifest the fundamental quality of their thoughts: absolute metaphysics. We reply that Engels, after Hegel, understood metaphysics as considering phenomenon, fact, power, tendencies, etc., as unchangeable substances, and not as developing processes and, therefore, developing in constant contra-

dictions. If the trade union is a vicious imperialist substance from below to above, in all epochs and periods, so likewise the Comintern is for our innovators a vicious bureaucratic substance. The inner processes of the Comintern, the inevitable contradiction between the masses of members and the bureaucratic apparatus, are entirely left out of consideration in their calculations. The authors ask us: Do we believe that the bureaucracy under the influence of our thesis will surrender their interests? And is such a supposition to be described as idealism or materialism? Inquire further Ridley and Ram with inimitable irony, not observing that their own posing of the question must be characterized as lifeless metaphysics.

The bureaucracy is very strong, but it is certainly not as omnipotent as Ridley and Ram believe. In the U. S. S. R., the sharpening contradictions of the economic development pose ever more before the millions of members of the Party and Youth, the fundamental questions of program and tactics. Insofar as the bureaucrats will not be able to solve these contradictions, the millions of Communists and young Communists will be forced independently to think of their solution. To these masses we say today, and we will say tomorrow: "The Centrist bureaucracy conquered the apparatus of the Party, thanks to certain historic conditions. But you, worker-Communists, hold to the Party, not in the name of the bureaucrats but in the name of its great revolutionary past and its possible revolutionary future. We understand you fully. The revolutionary workers do not leap from organization to organization with lightness, as individual students. We Bolsheviki-Leninists are fully ready to help you worker-Communists regenerate the Party".

Supporting the German Communist Party are millions of workers. The catastrophic crisis in Germany places before it revolutionary problems as problems of life or death. On this ground without doubt will develop a deeper and deeper ideological struggle in the Party. If the few hundred Left Oppositionists remain on the side, they will become transformed into a powerless, lamentable sect. If, however, they participate in the inner ideological struggles of the Party, of which they remain an integral part despite all expulsions, they will win an enormous influence among the proletarian kernel of the Party.

The British Communist Party

No; the Left Opposition has no reason to tread the path which Ridley and Ram call for. Within the Comintern—even when one does not consider the U. S. S. R.—are to be found tens of thousands of workers who have lived through serious experiences, through a whole stream of disillusionments, and are forced to search for correct answers to all fundamental questions of politics. We must approach these workers and not turn our backs to them. It would be very sad if the critical members of the official British Communist Party would imagine that the opinions of Ridley and Ram represent the opinions of the Left Opposition.

(4) The authors of the thesis accuse the Left Opposition, especially the American League, of "absurdly over-rating" the importance of the British Communist Party. In no way do we over-rate its importance. The last elections sufficiently, clearly and openly exhibited the weakness of the British Communist Party. But the Left Opposition in Great Britain is today many hundred times weaker than this weak party. Ridley and Ram have as yet nothing. Supporting them are nobody but individuals who are not bound up with the struggle of the proletariat. Have they really attempted to draw an honest criticism of the Party? Where is their activity? Where are their program theses? Have they held discussions with the rank and file of the Party? Have they tried to convert them and win them to their support? Have Ridley and Ram, out of the 70,000 voters for the official Party, 700 or even 70 supporters? But in spite of this they are ready to organize the 4th International: The proletariat must believe in them implicitly—by credit, that they are really capable of building an international and to lead it.

The entire posing of the question is absolutely wrong. To this we must add that if the Left Opposition entertained this pernicious error and, decided to create today a 4th International, comrades Ridley and Ram, who differ with us on all fundamental questions, must openly and immediately build a 5th International.

The Movement In India

(5) The paragraph which concerns itself with India, also suffers an extraordinary abstraction. It is absolutely indisputable that India can accomplish its full national independence only through a really great revolution which will put in power the Indian proletariat. Another path of development is imaginable only, in this case, if the proletarian revolution in England comes to victory prior to the revolution in India. In such an event, the national liberation of India would come before—one must sup-

\*\* It is now necessary to repeat that the elections are not the only and precise measure of influence. In the struggles a real revolutionary Party always shows itself far more strongly than in parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the statistics of the votes are a very worthwhile indication of the strength or weakness of political parties. Only an archivist can ignore these indications.

pose for a short time only—the dictatorship of the proletariat, uniting around it the poor peasantry. But from these perspectives, which are absolutely correct, it is still a long way to affirm that India is already ripe for the dictatorship of the proletariat, that the Indian proletariat have outlived their conciliatory illusions, etc. No; before Indian Communism stands a not yet nearly begun task. The Bolsheviki-Leninists in India must accomplish an immense, tenacious, daily and difficult work. One must penetrate into all organizations of the working-class. One must educate the first cadres of worker-Communists. One must participate in the daily, "prosaic" life of the workers and their organizations. One must study the relations existing between the cities and the rural districts.

First Tasks First

To fulfill such a work, naturally, programmatic and tactical theses are necessary. But it would be incorrect to begin to work with the convocation of an international conference over the question of India, as our authors propose. A conference without sufficient preparation will produce nothing. If the Indian Left Oppositionists will occupy themselves with the selection of recent material and working it up, or at least translate it into one of the European languages (strikes, demonstrations, centers of the peasant movement, the parties and the political groups of the different classes, the activity of the Comintern, its appeals and slogans), they will, with such an important work, greatly facilitate the possibility of a collective elaboration of the program and tactics of the proletarian vanguard in India.

One must begin with the building of a serious nucleus of the Left Opposition of Indian comrades, who really stand upon the point of view of the Bolsheviki-Leninists.

—L. TROTSKY.

Kadikoy, November 7, 1931

Railroads in Wage Cut Drive

(Continued from page 1)

Seniority rights to older railroad men in the service are gradually being pushed aside. The manifesto points out that "technological changes, reducing total volume of employment, have limited seniority protection to fewer and fewer employees." Increased traffic cannot meet the situation. The employers would not even consider the mild proposal of the Brotherhoods for the adoption of federal legislation for retirement insurance and for elective workmen's compensation. Indeed, the employers will give nothing that they are not compelled to. Instead of the mild Brotherhood proposals, there must be a demand, linked with the struggle for the six hour day and 5 day week with no reduction in pay, for genuine unemployment insurance, paid for entirely by the railroad and other industries and by the government, and to be administered through labor's agencies.

To the plea of the Brotherhoods that the rights of the workers be preserved in the consolidation of the railroads that is going on apace, the Railway Employers' Executive gave a brusque reply. President Willard stated that "the carrier presidents were not in complete accord on this question", and hence nothing could be done about the matter.

Labor Heads and Bosses Congratulate Each Other

It is a striking commentary that the union head, Robertson, could say, concerning the conferences, that there had been "no encouragement that any action would be recommended or taken by railway managements to provide any substantial measure of relief of the present intolerable conditions." (Railway Age, (11-28-31). But the railroad president, Mr. Willard could say that "the conferences had been carried on in a fine spirit of friendship and that the discussions had been wholly devoid of any unpleasantness." To which labor leader Robertson replied in kind in his letter to Mr. Willard: "You have listened courteously to our propositions and have discussed them to some extent. . . . Thus our railroad Damon and Pythias. The exploiter of labor and the betrayer of labor have every reason to be cordial to one another. It is not they who will receive 10 and 15% wage cuts.

Railroaders! Prepare For Struggle

Railroad men! Another betrayal is being prepared for you by your leaders. The further and final destruction of your unions, built by decades of militant struggles, is being prepared for you by the bosses, joined by the false leaders of labor. Your militant resistance is the only answer.

The rank and file must build their movements around the central slogan of the six hour day and five day week, without reduction in pay. It is the main slogan for the preservation of the union and union conditions and for meeting the burning needs of all railroad workers. The Minneapolis Railroad Council, built around this central slogan, leads the way. Learn from them; work with them; unite with them to build a movement for militant railroad unionism—one that will make it possible to drive the betrayers of labor out of your ranks. Unite the ranks of railroad labor. Prepare for struggle against the bosses!

—MARTIN ABERN.

Read! Subscribe! TO Young Spartacus

Published by the National Youth Committee, Communist League of America (Opposition)

84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y. Enclosed please find fifty (\$0.50) cents for one year's subscription:

Name Address City State