

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

The French C.G.T.U. Congress

Issue of Trade Union Unity Confounded by Stalinists

The last congress of the revolutionary trade union center of the French workers—the C. G. T. U.—Unitary Confederation of Labor—was awaited with a great deal of curiosity and with much hope. Curiosity and to a certain degree also anxiety, on the part of the bourgeoisie and the reformists, for whom the revolutionary center, no matter how weak it may be, constitutes nevertheless a consistent and serious obstacle to the exploitation and the deception of the workers, and particularly in times of economic crisis threatens to become a dangerous enemy and rally the masses about it. In this sense too, were directed the hopes of the workers who had expected from this congress that it would correct the false line of the past few years and establish a detailed program for the struggles to come.

A few months ago, the congress of the reformists had been held and had demonstrated the disorder and the weakness of the reformists as well as the desire of the broad masses under their leadership in the C. G. T. U. to unite with the revolutionaries for mutual support in the future struggles. At the time, the C. G. T. U., which was also scheduled to hold its congress, had postponed it on the request of the R. I. L. U. in order to be able to prepare it better by profiting from the results achieved by the congress of the C. G. T. U. The pre-congressional discussion of the C. G. T. U., which coincided with a new turn in the French Communist party did indeed, despite the distortions of the Centrists, appear to be orientated toward serious reconstruction.

"Self-Criticism"

Many of the mistakes committed in the past, during the third period, had been severely criticized by the membership of the unions as well as by the leaders; there was a real field day for self-criticism and not even Monmousseau, the general secretary of the C. G. T. U., had been spared. Little by little, there was a return to trade union democracy, which attained its apex when articles of Left Oppositionists (naturally, deranged in the well known Stalinist manner) appeared in the official party press, on one of the most burning questions of the trade union movement in France, in the question of trade union unity, the leadership of the C. G. T. U., after several changes of position, even appeared to come close to the position adopted from the very first by the Left Opposition, and taken up later on by a number of trade union tendencies, that is to say, the position of unity through an amalgamation conference on the basis of the right to organize fractions and freedom of discussion.

To be sure, the bureaucrats gave their own interpretations to this program before the congress, adding their own formulas, such as "class struggle unity", in order to obscure the issues. But since it had for once taken the correct path, it was hoped that an unanimous solution would be arrived at by the congress. The belief that the C. G. T. U. had finally found the road toward trade union unity was strengthened by the fact that Monmousseau was sharply criticized in the Communist press by Losovsky himself for his article "A United C. G. T., a C. G. T. of Betrayal", and by the fact that even within the leading Communist fraction of the C. G. T. U. there was a strong current in favor of reentering the reformist C. G. T. All hopes received a brutal rebuff from the congress of the C. G. T. U. itself.

Monmousseau Reports

The report on the activity since the last congress, presented by Monmousseau, contained an open admission of the false line and the heavy mistakes committed by the Centrist leadership. During this time the C. G. T. U. had

lost 100,000 members while the reformists recorded a period of growth. Not one of the many strikes that had taken place in the course of the two years of the third period had been successful. According to the reporter himself, the general line of the C. G. T. U. had been impregnated with ultra-left sectarianism. The only thing which Monmousseau took pride in, was the forecast of the crisis which they were supposed to have made before anyone else.

To hide their own sad balance, and in order to distract attention from their own mistakes, Monmousseau launched a violent attack against the minority groups of all tendencies. It was just along this line of hiding their own weaknesses as much as possible, that the congress proceeded, organizing all sorts of vociferous demonstrations against the various minorities. The 900 delegates, 300 more than at the last congress, were to hide the loss of 100,000 members. The perfect unanimity in the resolutions that were voted were to wipe out the barrenness of the discussion among the delegates who were composed for the greater part of appointees of the party and the C. G. T. U.

The activity report, (and the discussion that was rushed through without arousing very much attention,) received a majority of 1333 votes against 168, among the latter being the 31 votes of the minority tendency in the Teachers' Union which stands very close to our own conceptions.

The Issue of Trade Union Unity

The pivotal point of the congress was the question of trade union unity. Much has been written about this question in our Opposition press. Before the congress, this question was posed in the following manner: everybody expected a decisive step on the part of the C. G. T. U. which was to represent, on the one hand, a reply to the maneuvers of Jonhauz at the last congress of the C. G. T., at which he issued a demagogic slogan in favor of unity; and on the other hand, to show that the Communist leaders of the trade unions are genuine protagonists of unity whereas the chiefs of the minority who have seized on the unity issue as a sort of an old war horse, in reality aim at the liquidation of revolutionary unionism, to the great advantage of the reformists.

The reporter on the unity question was one of the younger secretaries of the C. G. T. U.—Gitton—who has already, despite his youth, accumulated in practice all the stupidities of the elder bureaucrats. In fact that constitutes his fame. His report did not belie it. It was a melange of ultra-Left ideas on the impossibility of ever having unity with the reformists, on the "united front from below", unity within the C. G. T. U., etc. At one point, his sweep of eloquence led him to even go as far as to repeat Monmousseau's famous phrase: "A United C. G. T., a C. G. T. of Betrayal".

In brief, Gitton's report was decidedly anti-unity and refuted everything that had been written or done in favor of unity before the congress in the official Communist press.

This position served as the best weapon for the demagoguery of the anti-Communist minority leaders connected with the "Unity Committee" and greatly facilitated their work of disintegration within the revolutionary trade union center.

Minority Delegates Propose Correct Line

The delegates of the Teachers Federation and the autonomous Federation of Functionaries tried in vain to push through a resolution in favor of unity, stressing particularly that they had nothing in common with the liquidators of the "Unity Committee". The gathering of appointed officials did not follow them but obeyed instructions from

above. The R. I. L. U. delegate, Dahlem, who took part in the debates, on his own part developed the sectarian theory of red unions. He boasted of the creation of sectarian organizations like the R. G. O. in Germany, the "Reconstruction Committee" in Spain and declared himself opposed to unity.

Three motions were taken to vote: that of the Unity Committee for reentrance into the reformist C. G. T., that of the Teachers' Federation (the same as that of the Left Opposition) and that of the majority of the Confederation. Naturally, the majority motion received an overwhelming majority. But one can judge how serious this vote was by the fact alone that the delegates were informed about the contents of the majority motion only after the congress had adjourned. The formulation of this motion represents a document full of Centrist confusion, in which the united front is confounded with unity, hiding behind radical phrases the clear intention of the Centrist leaders of the C. G. T. U. not to pay any attention to the sentiment for unity.

Rush Through Agenda

Once the question of unity had been decided on by the Congress, all the other questions were rushed through hastily, despite their great importance. The reports on the Unemployment demands, on the foreign-born workers, brought forth no discussion whatsoever. The only effect of the turn seemed to be the recognition of the necessity to fight for immediate demands, contradicting thereby the whole theory of the third period. This elementary truth was announced triumphantly as a new discovery although no concrete proposals of work were made with regard to the organization of the united front, the immediate tactic, etc. In one of the most burning questions of the present moment in France, in the question of the foreign born worker, who is among the very first victims of the crisis and of the capitalist repression, the Congress of the C. G. T. U. had nothing to say. In short, the congress was one of the worst in the existence of the C. G. T. U.

If, from the point of view of revolutionary importance, the congress of the C. G. T. U. cannot be compared with the congress of the C. G. T., we can only deplore the fact that so many hopes were shattered, that so much faith in the congress was destroyed by its derisive reply. A great deal of effort and many months will be needed to bring the C. G. T. U. back to its correct path, to the road of revolutionary unionism. The economic situation in France is growing worse every day, unemployment which was negligible up to the present, is becoming a real menace, the working class is preparing to react, the necessity of a mass trade union organization with a revolutionary program is becoming an imperative necessity.

Left Opposition Has Correct Path

From the point of view of numbers and strength, the activity of the Left Opposition at the congress was very weak. The mistakes committed in the past, the errors of the "Unitary Opposition", the absence of theses on the trade union question that should have been elaborated by our National Conference, all this contributed to the fact that the position of the Opposition was not defended with the necessary vigor at the congress.

At the congress itself certain mistakes were committed in the vote on the political report. This mistake was later corrected by the Executive Commission. On the other hand, we did not seek any contact with the federation and unions that defended the same point of view as ourselves, which constituted a second grave mistake, so that our own resolution received only one vote.

In spite of all this, the perspectives of the Left Opposition, which alone has the correct path at the present, are very good. Its role will take on a greater importance as the crisis will develop and it should show itself capable of penetrating the broader masses.

December, 1931

FELIX.

IN GERMANY

A Very Dangerous Strategic Error

Policy of the Communist Party Hastens Fascist Menace

The external difficulties for Communism in Germany are growing. Every day brings new advances of the fascists. Let us enumerate them briefly: the gathering of the forces of the reactionary coalition at Harzburg, which did not, it is true, lead to the immediate collapse of the Brüning government, but whose economic program is becoming more and more the common property of the whole bourgeoisie. The elections in Hamburg, in Anhalt and in Hesse (the latter two are small federated states) which led to really phantastic successes for the Nazis. They almost doubled their votes over last year. Four parties are left altogether: the Nazis, the clerical Center, with Brüning, the greatly reduced Social Democratic party and the Communist Party. It must be observed that the C. P. G. did actually harness the greatest part of the votes (not the membership) that have been swept away from the Social Democracy and that only the petty bourgeois camp followers have gone over to the Fascists.

It is most noteworthy that the Fascists have succeeded in crushing the petty bourgeois parties, but have not penetrated into the bulk of the proletariat. Nevertheless, their parliamentary successes are extremely menacing, all the more so, since they are accompanied by an ever growing extra-parliamentary activity. The bloody terror, tolerated and even encouraged by the police and the courts of the republic, built up and protected by the Social Democracy, is constantly on the rise (Eleven workers murdered by Fascists in the month between October 18 to November 18 alone). One of its classical examples is Brunswick. There we already have Nazi ministers. One hundred thousand armed Nazis marched into the state, and undisturbed by the police of their party comrades, they undertook a veritable punitive expedition into the proletarian quarters, after the style of the Italian model, announcing thereby their future tactic. Finally, the underhand dealings of the semi-fascist Brüning government, which enjoys the support of the S. P. D., with Hitler, show with what speed we are going over to Fascism.

Proletariat Develops United Front Against Fascism

What must be done now? Instinctively, the working class entered on the correct path when it closed its ranks and disregarded party affiliations in its active defense against the Fascists by powerful strikes on the day the victims of the Fascists were buried. Here there was formed the united front, positive sentiment for which has been very strong in the factories, despite all illusions. On this basis of common struggle against Fascism, the C. P. G. ought to have approached the reformist workers, and in order to destroy their illusions—the reformist organizations as well, as was already suggested by comrade Trotsky a year ago. Likewise, it ought to exploit the strong sentiment against wage reductions in factories in order to build up the united front, which is the prerequisite for all further development of the class struggle in Germany. But for this, it was necessary to carry on systematic work toward the formation of a Left wing in the reformist trade unions. The extraordinary danger inherent in the situation demands just such a tactic. In an open letter to the German Central Committee, the German Opposition has made concrete proposals leading to the establishment of the united front.

C. P. Fails To Carry Out United Front Toward S. P. D.

Despite all its talk about the united

front, the party leadership has proved itself ideologically actually bringing it about. It is too inextricably tied down by its ultra-Left phrases, to be able to build up a movement on a broad basis. It can only conceive of that sort of a united front with the social democratic workers, which requires of the latter adherence to its own organizations. Its entire trade union work involves unsuccessful and impotent attempts at the erection of trade unions of its own.

The sectarianism of the party leadership goes to such great bounds, that the leadership of the S. P. G. can afford to offer a united front to the party through its spokesman, Breitscheid, although the social democrats fear the united front more than the devil himself. But they know only too well that the party will not at all try to force them to keep their word. So they can afford this maneuver as a concession to the sentiment within their ranks and to bring pressure on the bourgeoisie.

False Strategy of C. P. Holds Grave Dangers for Workers

The real misfortune lies in the false strategy that is behind the whole tactic of the Communist Party, a strategy which, by disrupting the labor movement from within, is much more dangerous than the external enemy, the Fascists. The German Opposition has opened up a determined struggle against this strategy in its open letter. It bears on no less a question than that of evaluating the victory of the Fascists. After confounding the question for years, designating first the reformist, then the clerical government as Fascist, the Party today declares, in view of the threat of a Fascist victory: "The Fascist gentlemen do not frighten us... They are going to go smash much faster than every other government." (Remmele in the Reichstag, Oct. 14).

What does this mean? The Fascist upheaval is inevitable, we are not in a position to prevent it, but that is no cause to be worried, not a very great misfortune; the Fascists will very rapidly disintegrate; under their blows the united front will really have to be forged together, the victory of Fascism is a necessary step toward the victory of the proletariat. This ideology is not confined to the mouthpieces of the leadership alone, but has, unfortunately, infected the minds of many sincere members as well. All this sounds terribly radical. And yet behind the radical phraseology (not for the first time, as the Bulgarian June days have proved, among other things) there is concealed what is most despicable for revolutionaries, namely: capitulation. Their partial ideological capitulation before Fascism, arising with the "national program" and the "people's revolution", of necessity leads to what very nearly amounts to betrayal in practice.

Stalinist Policy Leads to Capitulation Before Enemy

The roots of this sentiment are quite obvious. They lie in the complete political impotence of the party in the face of its task to withstand the rise of Fascism by organizing the united front. As always, the Centrist bureaucracy is transforming its own incapability into a law of nature, and they still enjoy the confidence of the membership, which, with its equipment of ultra-Left phrases, likewise has no faith in the possibility of establishing the united front and gladly leave this task to Hitler. This sentiment is an expression of despair, signifying that the party has landed in a morass.

After the Prussian plebiscite, Trotsky

very correctly wrote of the "school of bureaucratic centrism, as the school of capitulation" (witness China, Germany in 1923, England, Poland, Bulgaria, Finland, etc.) It is well known that Stalin counseled the German Communists even in 1923 not to seize power themselves, but to allow the Fascists to try their hand first. In the latest Centrist strategy of capitulation, the teaching of socialism in one country also plays a not unimportant part. They do not want to endanger Russian construction, which is to complete socialism in a few years, by risking a German revolution, but much prefer to do the one after the other, according to the bureaucratic calendar, forgetting all the while how greatly intervention is facilitated by this very tactic.

The Menace of German Fascism

The one and only Marxist fashion of posing the question is to take into account the entire experiences of the international working class (Italy, etc.). "The victory of Fascism means the suppression of the German revolution for a period of years and almost certain death for the U. S. S. R. It is the revolutionary task of the German proletariat to prevent Fascism from seizing power. The fate of the proletariat is completely and entirely bound up with this problem." (Open Letter of the German Opposition).

Their policy of despair is also expressed in the fact that, at a time when extra-parliamentary actions against Fascism and wage slashing constitute the only proper weapons, the party relies on parliamentary actions. Thus, it proposes the dissolution of the Diet in Saxony, although the diet has become completely meaningless in the eyes of the masses, and although that can only result in a "united front" with the Fascists, as in Prussia, and thereby only serves to obstruct the genuine united front; and despite the fact that in contradiction to the Prussian episode, it is quite clear in advance that the Fascists and not the party would be the beneficiaries of such an action. But such a policy of self-deception is quite in line with and completely justified by the latest strategy.

Fight To Remove C. P. Policy of Despair

We are approaching the end of a certain phase of development. The ultra-Left phraseology ends in rotten opportunism, with a capitulationist ideology, which, transcribed into practice, is bound to bring much worse results than in 1923. It cannot be determined in advance whether Centrism will follow this path through to the end. It is precisely the nature of Centrism that makes more turns possible—and more adventurism. But the dangers of surrendering without a struggle are very great. For this reason, and precisely because Centrism is in a certain degree susceptible to persuasion, all forces must be set in motion against the disastrous strategy of despair. It is a matter of life and death for German, even for international Communism. —E. BAUER.

Leipzig, Nov. 20, 1931

the Balkanization of the Iberian peninsula is inconsistent with the aim of the proletariat, and by employing it indiscriminately. You are quite right. If I have not underscored it sufficiently in my preceding letter, I am prepared to do so with ten-fold stress right now. The analogy between the two peninsulas really needs to be completed. There was a time when the Balkan peninsula was unified under the domination of the Turkish gentry, the militarists and the pro-consuls. The oppressed people longed for the overthrow of their oppressors. If the idea that we do not want any partitioning of the peninsula had been counterposed to these aspirations of the people, that would have meant acting as lackeys to the Turkish pashas and beyes. On the other hand, however, we know that the Balkan peoples liberated from the Turkish yoke, have been at one another's throat for decades. In this question, too, the proletarian vanguard can apply the point of view of the permanent revolution: liberation from the imperialist yoke as the most important element of the democratic revolution leads immediately to the Federation of Soviet Republics as the state form for the proletarian revolution. Not opposing the democratic revolution, but, on the contrary, supporting it completely even under the form of separation (that is, supporting the struggle and not the illusions), we at the same time bring our own independent position into the democratic revolution, recommending, counseling, propagating the idea of the Soviet Federation of the Iberian peninsula as a constituent part of the United States of Europe. Only under this form is my conception complete. Needless to say, the Madrid comrades, and the Spanish comrades in general should use particularly great discretion with regard to the Balkanization argument. —L. TROTSKY.

Kadikoy, Sept. 1st, 1931

A Letter to Andres Nin

The Catalanian Separatists, Soviets, and the Communists

Dear Friend:

I have received your letter of August 25th. You pose the question to yourself: shall we call upon the workers to join the Party or the (Catalonian) federation? The local conditions speak in favor of the federation. The general—Spanish—conditions speak in favor of the Party. From the practical point of view, that is, from the point of view of the relationship of forces at the given moment, it is difficult to solve this problem, but it seems to me that our principle position is really of decisive importance: we declare that we are a faction of the Party, a faction of the Comintern. The main struggle against us is carried on along the line that we are "enemies" of the U. S. S. R. and the Comintern. Even Maurin lives on the crumbs that fall from this table.

If we call upon the workers to join the federation, we compromise ourselves on the whole Spanish and on the international scale. Do we gain at all, on the Catalanian scale? If we consider the present results of the co-operation with

the federation, we find that we have derived more harm than profit from it. The entire Comintern press, and the Pravda in particular, has held us responsible for Maurin's opportunist confusionism. Comrade Mill's articles in La Verite also contributed to a great extent in the matter. Nevertheless, we have been forced to break with the federation and we have left almost empty-handed. In other words, the experiences of the co-operation with the federation have weakened us on the whole Spanish, as well as international, scale without helping us any on the Catalanian scale. It is time to draw up the balance. In my opinion, we ought to execute an abrupt turn of policy here, to avoid continuing to be confused with Maurin—to his advantage and to our own disadvantage.

It would be most correct to call upon the workers to join the Communist Left faction, to build up their own units and to demand admission into the Party. That does not at all prevent us from simultaneously building up Left wing units in

the federation as well as in the official Party. But such a policy requires an official center, no matter how small, of the Left Opposition in Catalonia. You will perhaps recall that I insisted on this from the very first day of your arrival in Barcelona, but, unfortunately, without success. At the present time, too, I cannot see any other way.

The Slogan of Soviets

Maurin has issued the slogan: "All the power to the proletariat." I think you are quite right in pointing out that he has chosen slogans of this sort in order to put up a bridge for himself to the syndicalists and to lend himself the appearance of greater strength than he actually possesses. Unfortunately, the pursuit of appearances is very strong in politics, and very disastrous in revolutionary politics. I ask myself (at times) why there are no Soviets in Spain. What is the cause of this? In my former letter, I expressed several ideas in this respect. I have developed these much more amply in the article I sent you on workers' control in Germany. It appears that the slogan of the "juntas" is

associated in the minds of the Spanish workers with the slogan of Soviets, and for this reason it seems too sharp, too decisive, too "Russian" to them—that is to say, they look at it in a different light than the Russian workers did at the corresponding stage. Are we not confronted with an historical paradox, when the existence of Soviets in the U. S. S. R. paralyzes the creation of Soviets in other revolutionary countries? This question must be given the utmost attention in private conversations with workers in different parts of the country. At any event, if the slogan of Soviets (juntas) does not catch (not yet?), then we must concentrate on the slogan of factory committees. I wrote on this subject in the article on workers' control mentioned above. On the basis of factory committees, we can develop the Soviet organization without referring to them by name.

Workers' Control

On the question of workers' control, you are, in my opinion, absolutely correct: to renounce workers' control only because the reformists—in words—want it, would be an enormous stupidity. On the contrary, that is just why we should seize upon it all the more eagerly and force the reformist workers to put it into practice by means of the united front with us, and on the basis of this

experience push them into opposition to Caballero and the other fakery.

We succeeded in creating Soviets in Russia only because they were demanded, together with us, also by the Mensheviks and the S. R., though for other ends. We cannot create any Soviets in Spain precisely because neither the Socialists nor the syndicalists want Soviets. That means that the united front and the organizational unity with the majority of the working-class cannot be created under this slogan. But here is Caballero himself, forced to it by the pressure of the masses, seizing upon the slogan of workers' control and thereby opening the door for the united front policy and to an organization embracing the majority of the working-class. We must take a hold of it with both hands. Certainly, Caballero will want to transform workers' control into the control of the capitalist over the workers. But that question already belongs in the domain of the relationship of forces inside the working-class. If we succeed in creating factory committees all over the country, then in this revolutionary epoch that we are witnessing, Messrs. Caballero will have lost the decisive battle.

The Separatist Movement and the Iberian Soviet Federation

You describe how one can aid Madrilen liberalism by distorting the idea that