

IN THE INTERNATIONAL OF LABOR

Reviews and News of the Working Class and Revolutionary Movements

In Spain

The Fascist Danger and the Need for a United Front of the Proletariat

(Continued from last issue)

What is missing are mass organizations, such as the Soviets, which assemble the whole working class and become the instrument of the insurrection and of the seizure of power. Above all, there is missing a strong Communist party, without which victory is impossible. If the working class is conquered without a battle or after a heroic but ineffectual putsch, its defeat, its passivity will favor the evolution of the petty bourgeoisie to the right and will permit the bourgeoisie to lean upon it in striking a death-blow against the proletariat. Under these circumstances, Fascism will find a magnificent basis for its development.

This perspective is possible, but not inevitable, far from it. The working class must keep it in mind in order to foresee all the dangers, and to attack the enemy more surely and more decisively. The situation is clearly a revolutionary one. The capitalist crisis is more aggravated from day to day. There is no solution. The bourgeoisie keeps consolidating its position in a desperate effort, but stumbles over unheard-of difficulties in trying to consolidate them definitely.

It tries to gain time by constituting a government presided over by socialists. The working class must take account of this and not give the bourgeoisie a moment's breathing spell. In revolutionary periods such as those in which we are living, events develop with extraordinary speed. The revolutionary consciousness of the masses progresses similarly in geometric ratio. What is missing is a party to concretize this revolutionary consciousness into precise formulas and organize the masses for action. This party does not even exist, although there is potentially an intense Communist spirit in the country. The working class must be given this indispensable instrument for its emancipation. A great revolutionary proletarian party must be forged, existing in all the Communist forces which, until in the country, and giving it a clear and precise program. Only in this way can the Fascist danger be averted; and the Spanish proletariat, allied with the peasants, can advance with a firm and sure step on the road which leads to victory.

The possibility of success in the struggle against the Fascist danger and in the constitution of a strong Communist party will depend principally on the ability to put an end to the trade union split which has torn apart the working class of our country.

In this sense, the Communist party is called upon to fulfill a role of the very first importance, by struggling implacably against the chronic splitters among the anarchists and the U. G. T., by proving in practice to the proletariat that it desires unity, and by an ardent struggle to attain unity.

Unfortunately, the Party in this field has followed a fundamentally false policy, which culminated in the famous Seville Conference and in the constitution of the Reconstruction Committee, which created a deserved unpopularity which has not yet been removed.

has deepened the split still further. Three or four months ago the Party, faced with the open collapse of its trade-union policy, announced a "turn". It gave up the splitting tactics, which had produced such miserable results, and announced the transformation of the Reconstruction Committee into a Unity Committee.

The Spanish Communist Opposition greeted this "turn" with satisfaction, as it was the same thing as an implied recognition of the accuracy of its criticism; at the same time, it encouraged the Communists to prevent the turn announced by the party from remaining on paper, which there was reason to fear from the persistency with which the party stuck to some of its fundamental mistakes.

"As far as the trade union policy is concerned", said the Central Committee of the Opposition in the open letter addressed to this purpose, to all members of the party, "the symptoms are even more disturbing. Concrete propositions for a united front have been made to the C. N. T., but the Reconstruction Committee continues to function, and even after the circular of the Political Secretariat announcing the turn in the policies of the party, has published various manifestoes over its signatures. If the wishes of the Executive Committee are sincere, it must prove it in practice. The members of the party must impose their will in this direction on the leaders."

Our fears were more than justified. The party, far from orientating itself sincerely toward unity, emphasized its policy of division. This is the reality, the more so as it tries to present itself on the outside, formally, as the most resolute defender of unity.

Its decision to call a so-called "Trade Union Unity Conference", using as in 1925 (!) the Federation of Working Class Organizations of San Sebastian, can only lead to a second edition, revised and enlarged, of the Seville Reconstruction Committee, that is to say, to the creation of a third central body.

It is evident beyond a doubt that only an insignificant minority of trade unionists will participate in this conference, and that the great organizations of the C. N. T. and the U. G. T. will not send delegates. Under these circumstances, can the conference produce any other result than a new split?

The experience of the last few years shows that this road is not the most desirable one to reach the unity so ardently desired; that with unity conferences and proposals for fusion congresses, absolutely nothing is accomplished. Unity must be achieved from below, after passing through the phase of the united front. The struggle against the bosses' offensive, the problems presented by the revolution, have shown clearly before the eyes of the working class the necessity of coordinating and unifying its forces. Otherwise, it will be hopelessly crushed by the enemy, and the bourgeoisie, allied with the landlords, will accomplish once and for all the strangling of the revolution.

There is not a single worker, no matter how little conscious he is, who does not understand the necessity of forming a single front with the comrades who work with him in the same factory, in the same shop, in the same mine. The Factory Committee, elected by all workers of the same class without exception, whether or not organized in trade unions, or belonging to the C. N. T., or the U. G. T., or whatever their political affiliation may be, offers them the effective possibility of realizing their unity in action. The struggle for unity must therefore be begun from below, by undertaking an energetic campaign in favor of the constitution of Factory Committees throughout the country.

Once unity has been achieved in this way from below, the working class, impelled by the very logic of the struggle, will reach the conclusion that it needs, not yet, the united front, but unity from the viewpoint of organization, on a national scale. This road is apparently slower than that of the fusion congress which is favored as the first and last step, but in reality it is much faster, and above all, infinitely more effective.

The struggle for unity has, besides, other invaluable advantages pointed out already by us in the past. In the first place, it offers the proletariat a magnificent occasion to counterpose the revolutionary control of production, exercised by these Committees, to the project for so-called "workers' control" worked out by Largo Caballero, which is only a concealed form of class collaboration.

In the second place, in the course of development of revolutionary events in our country, the Factory Committees can serve as a powerful stimulus to the appearance of Soviets, those irreplaceable organs of the proletarian revolution.

Let us therefore abandon the empty propaganda for trade union unity and those efforts which, like the conference planned by the party, only deepen the split, and let us work actively and resolutely for real and immediate unity in action of the working class, by driving forward with the greatest energy the creation of Factory Committees.

Barcelona, Nov. 27, 1931

—ANDRES NIN.

In Bulgaria

On the afternoon of October 11, 1931, a bloody dispute took place in the courtyard of Philippopol Prison among the political prisoners—all of them comrades who have fought and suffered for the cause of the proletariat. This quarrel, called forth by racial differences, of opinion and by reciprocal insults deeply shook the sentiments of the working-class circles.

The press of Stalin's tools—ECHO, Workers' Action, etc.—was filled with declarations and protests of prisoners of the Philippopol Prison. Our excellent comrades, at the head of whom stands the noble and steadfast D. Gatchev, sentenced to death like so many other Oppositionists, were treated in these declarations as a herd of bandits, as a gang of Fascists, enjoying the approval of the prison warden, against whom punishment and removal were demanded. The followers of Stalin, who has not desisted from shooting, imprisonment and deportation of people of the rank of Leon Trotsky and Christian Rakovsky, are all alarmed over the incidents in the Philippopol Prison. They are calling for the intervention of bourgeois justice and are contending to it the decisions of inner-party disputes.

In this, just as all the other lackeys in the rest of the world, they are treating their opponents of the Opposition as traitors, or as tools of the bourgeoisie and of Fascism. They have neither the courage nor the ability for a free and honest struggle to compare both methods; that of Lenin and that of Trotsky which assured the proclamation and the entrenchment of the revolution in Russia, and on the other hand, that of Stalin and Molotov, who are subjecting all the acquisitions of the great Russian revolution, both the ideological as well as the organizational ones, to an international danger by entrenchment, destruction and demoralization.

More than that; the political prisoners, poisoned by the Stalinist opium, who are nevertheless our comrades, in the same class and in the same struggle, go as far as to issue—before the whole working class of the country, before the entire world proletariat,—in the Stalinist press, which could find not a single word of fraternal conciliation, and reciprocal toleration, this declaration: "It will be impossible to prevent new attacks upon us, bloody conflicts are inevitable." And since the Stalinists are in the majority, it is quite apparent that a new bloody attack is being organized against our comrades, which is already now prepared psychologically and justified in advance.

Whom do these tragic quarrels serve? Comrades on both sides, come to your senses! Can't you sum up sufficient moral strength to rise above these altogether too primitive methods of struggle, of application for a judgment from the authorities of our class enemies? Are you going to show yourselves incapable of rising to the level of proletarian ethics? Can you not find the strength for this by respecting the views of your

A Letter to a Comrade by Leon Trotsky

Left Opposition and the Brandlerites

Dear comrade:

I will try to express my views on the questions raised by you as briefly as possible. From the first, I had considered the disintegration of the Brandlerist faction as something absolutely inevitable. A revolutionary faction which has no doctrine, no general conception of the world situation, no elaborated strategic principles, is doomed, as a cross between Communism and social democracy, to a hand to mouth vegetation and cannot withstand the convulsions of the present epoch. Brandler and Thalheimer, the "leaders" of the international Right wing opposition called us "sectarians". Now, when we do possess a certain amount of cadres and begin slowly to grow, these alleged representatives of mass action find themselves in the midst of complete disintegration. Half of the leaders want to join Stalin, the other half Seydewitz. When Messrs. Brandler and Thalheimer take the part of yes-men with regard to everything that goes on in the Soviet Union, that does not prove at all that they are blinded by nature or that they have been dazzled

by the wisdom of the Stalinists, but much rather, that they do not care a snap what happens in the country of the October revolution. Up to February 15, 1928 Brandler and Thalheimer repeatedly said: The Opposition's program of industrialization and collectivization is a utopia. Beginning with February 16, they immediately approved the new program of Stalin which was only a caricature of our own. One can more readily understand why it is that the Stalinists, under the immediate pressure of difficulties and contradictions which they are incapable of either overcoming or even of understanding, are engaged in changing their position sharply and in taking refuge behind lies, but it is really repulsive to see these two Berlin peewits constantly saying yes and yes, without taking any part at all in the affair outside of their fervent desire to be appointed to high functions. And the fact that the Right wing opposition tolerates the likes of them in its midst, nay, at its head, is in my eyes very characteristic of that organization.

We, the Left Opposition, are weak. We are growing slowly. But we are patient. The cadres of the Comintern consist either of completely used up, formerly revolutionary, elements or of neutral hirelings. The Marxist tradition has been broken. What is sailing now under the flag of Leninism is only a mishmash of the most heterogeneous elements, cemented by the blunt Stalinist ignorance. The authority of the October revolution has become an obstacle to revolutionary development. That is the dialectic of history: reason becomes nonsense, October revolution becomes Kaganovitch. Under such conditions, how can the Marxist tendency be expected to move forward at express speed? In order to master the international situation, its turns, changes, etc., a certain theoretical level is required, or at least a certain amount of political experience. The masses can only approve of us, insofar as our views withstand the test of events and are confirmed by them. Example: Our small German organization is making a serious step forward precisely because it is holding its own in this eventful situation, while the Brandlerites are forced into bankruptcy.

Com. St. believes, according to what you say, that there are unreliable, even discrediting Cantonists among us, especially in Austria. It is true, in Austria there exist, to be sure, not four but—insofar as I have been informed—two groups who count themselves as members of the Left Opposition, both of which we are, however, for the time being, allowing to take their course outside of the framework of our organization because just now we lay more weight on quality than on numbers. Numbers only make up the real mass, when the cadres maintain themselves by their quality, that is, by their ideas, and methods. What will the great successes come? That I cannot tell you. The Left Opposition remained a small minority in the German social democracy for years. The Zimmerwald Left consisted of single comrades from various countries, and they were not—as comrade St. very well knows—not as comrade St. a young Norwegian poet, the forced Hoeglund from Sweden, Julius Borchart, etc. But the doctrine was solid, the orientation firm, the methods correct, that is, appropriate for the epoch. And out of this small group, the Third International arose. To be sure, through the intermediary of the October revolution. Great revolutions always consume whole generations, and that is just the case now. To a certain, but only to a certain degree, it is necessary to begin anew at present. In this, the most important task is to preserve the continuity of the revolutionary-Marxist, that is—in our epoch, of the Bolshevik idea and to transmit it to the younger generation. The confused Cantonists, who "discredit" us will be hurled aside. One should choose one's path according to the fundamental, determining, objective factors and not according to the subjective impressions of one group or another of followers of the revolution or tendency. Engels once wrote to Bernstein somewhat along these lines: "We (i. e. Marx and Engels, naturally) remained in the minority all our life and were quite comfortable at that". I do not mean to say by this, that we should make this our aim. In my life, it also happened that I was among the majority. But all those who constantly rave about the "masses" and the "majority" never actually attain it, at least not for revolutionary ends. The masses are not won over by a special mass technique, as Brandler and Thalheimer conceive of it—in this field, the trade union fakery are sky-high superior to them,—the masses are won over in our epoch, full of events and crises, only by a clear revolutionary, social conception.

The further development of the German situation will be decisive for the international labor movement, and in the first instance, for the Comintern. Should the German proletariat be victorious—this can only happen by the greatest tension of all the creative forces latent in it—then the dictatorship of the empty and brutal Stalinist bureaucracy will immediately fall, great ideological struggles will be solved, the Left Opposition will have a fruitful effect on the renovation of the labor movement in Germany and in the entire world. Should the German proletariat be defeated by the Fascists, then all will be over with the Comintern and possibly also with the Soviet Union. For the world proletariat, that will mean a set-back for long years to come. Under these tragic conditions, the Left Opposition will take over the task of continuing to expand the Marxist idea, but certainly no longer within the formal framework of the Third International. We have a long run perspective. The events can accelerate our development, even give it a feverish pace. All the better! We are, however, also prepared to carry on propagandistic and educational work for long years as "sectarians", in order to prepare the yeast for the future.

With best Communist regards,
L. TROTSKY.

E. BAUER.

Rumblings in the German Social Democracy

LEIPZIG, GERMANY

The "counter-revolutionary" situation, that is, the situation immediately preceding the Fascist overthrow, also has its peculiar laws and phenomenon.

Apart from the objective factors, a certain weakening of the social democracy (without strengthening Communism and accompanied by a general demoralization of the working class) is required to make the social democracy incapable of securing the further existence of bourgeois society outside of its Fascist form. Furthermore, this requires the going over of the decisive, hitherto "democratic" sections of the big bourgeoisie to Fascism. In the last two weeks these two processes have developed rather rapidly in Germany. A fast tempo was conditioned—not in the last place—by the abrupt aggravation of the crisis, which proceeded in the trail of the events in England, especially those concerning the British tariffs which are ruinous for German trade.

Insofar as is turned of opinion in the bourgeoisie as the concern I should like to stop for a moment, first of all, on the field of the political super-structure, on the press. It is of the greatest significance that a sheet of such world importance and democratic traditions, as the Frankfurter Zeitung, demands in all earnestness and with the greatest determination—a Brüning-Hitler coalition. It can easily be understood from this turn of opinion that the bourgeoisie is perceiving with the greatest brutality all its outsiders who have remained true to the old liberal traditions, who have remained anti-Fascists. In number 37 of the Militant, the case of the editor Ossietzky has already been mentioned. The case of editor Hoellering is likewise important. On the demand of the Minister of the Reichswehr, Groener (who has breakfasted more than once with Hitler) he was discharged by the Jewish democratic publishing house of Ullstein, without notice because he had revealed the air armaments of Hitler's private army! It is also typical that the hitherto "republican" police officers of Severing have openly declared their solidarity with a man who has been brought up on charges because of anti-republican activity (that is, by the way, a contribution to the reformist practice of the "peaceful" acquisition of the state apparatus). We are intentionally quoting only such examples as have to do with the camp of the formerly democratic bourgeoisie. As to the direct and stormy growth of the National "Socialists", enough has already been said to make things clear to everybody.

The social democrats are supporting with suicidal steadfastness the emergency measures, which are inspired by a sincere and deep effort to find the straight way to the social liberation of the proletariat.

Osvobodjenje is not publishing any prophetic articles as the political prisoners at the Philippopol penitentiary claim. (See the Echo, No. 227).

The tragedy of Philippopol Prison must arouse the conscience of the proletariat so that the Stalinist action will one day be forced to cease identifying itself with the proletariat and to realize that highest law which rules the normal development of the proletariat's struggle is the principle of inner-party democracy which allows for the broadest and most fruitful development of the idea of the freedom of the proletariat. In the name of this inner-party democracy, the political prisoners of the Left Opposition of the Philippopol penitentiary, have brought their first sacrifices. Let us hope that these will be the last sacrifices, and that the opponents will quickly be united fraternally before the common class enemy.

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