What They Say in Prague About the United Front

From the Series of Articles in the Forthcoming Book 'The Only Road' : -: by Leon Trotsky

(Continued from last issue)

The united front on the international scale, as we have said above, contains the greatest difficulties and dangers, for there the formulation of the practical tasks and the organization of mass control is harder. That is how matters stand above all in the question of the struggle against war. The prospects of joint actions are far slighter here, the possibilities of subterfuge and deception by the reformists and pacifists are far greater. By this, of course, we do not contend that the united front in this field is out of the question. On the contrary, we demanded that the Comintern should turn directly and immediately to the Second and the Amsterdam Internationals with the proposal for a joint anti-war congress. It would then have been the task of the Comintern to work out the most concrete possible obligations, applicable to the various countries and differing circumstances. Were the social democracy compelled to agree to such a congress, the problem of war, providing there were a correct policy on our side, could be driven into its ranks like a sharp wedge.

The first premise for this: utmost clarity, political as well as organiational. There is involved an agreement of proletarian, million-membered organizations, which are today still divided by deep antagonisms in principle. No ambiguous intermediaries, no diplomatic masqueradings and hollow pacifist formula!

The Comintern, however, found it proper this time also to act counter to the A B C of Marxism: while it refused to enter into open negotiations with the reformist Internationals, it opened up negotiations behind the scenes with Friedrich Adler through the medium...of the pacifist literary gentleman and first class muddlehead, Henri Barbusse. As a result of this policy, Barbusse gathered together in Amsterdam half-masked Communist or "related", "sympathizing" organizations and groups, together with the pacifist free lancers of all countries. The most honest and sincere among the latter-and they are the minoritycan each say for himself: "I and my confusion." Who needed this masquerade, this bazaar of intellectualistic conceit, this Münzenbergerie, which converges into downright political charlatanry?*

But let us return to Prague. Five months after the appearance of the article discussed above, the same journal printed the article of one of the party leaders, Kl. Gottwald, which bears the character of an appeal to the Czechoslovakian workers of the different tendencies to make fighting agreements. The Fascist danger menaces all of Central Europe: the onslaught of the reaction can be beaten off only by the unity of the proletariat; no time should be lost, it is already "five minutes to twelve". The appeal is very passionately written. In vain, however, does Gottwald swear, following Seydewitz and Thälmann, that he is not pursuing the interests of the party but the interests of the class: such a contrast is absolutely improper in the mouth of a Marxist. Gottwald stigmatizes the sabotage of the social democratic leaders. It is needless to say that the truth here is entirely on his side. Unfortunately, the author says nothing direct about the policy of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party: evidently he is not resolved upon defending it, but does not yet dare to criticize it. Gottwald himself, nevertheless, goes into the grievous question, not resolutely, it is true, but still fairly correctly. After he has called upon the workers of the various tendencies to come to an agreement in the factories, Gottwald writes: "Many of you may perhaps say: Unite there 'at the top', we 'below' will get together pretty easily." We believe, continues the author, "that the most important thing is for the workers to agree 'below'. And as for the leaders: we have already said that we combine even with the devil if only it is directed against the rulers and in the interests of the workers. And we say to you openly: if your leaders give up their alliance with the bourgeoisie for even a single instant, proceed in reality against the rulers even in one question-we will greet it and support them in it."

Almost everything necessary is said here, and almost the way it should be said. Gottwald did not even forget to mention the devil, whose name the editorial board of Rude Pravo printed five months before in pious indignation. Gottwald did indeed omit the devil's grandmother. But God be with her: for the sake of the united front we are ready to sacrifice her. Perhaps Gottwald would be prepared, for his part to console the offended old dame by turning over to her disposal the article from Rude Pravo of February 27, together with the inkwell--"worker correspondent".

Gottwald's political considerations, let us hope, are applicable not only to Czechoslovakia but also to Germany. And that's just how it should have been said. On the other hand, neither in Berlin nor in Prague can the party leadership confine itself to the bald declara-

* The fact that the Brandlerites (see their Stuttgart Tri. bune of August 27, carefully separated itself from us in this question too, and supported the masquerade of Stalin, Manuilsky, Losovsky, Muenzenberg, surprises us least of all. After supplying the model of their united front policy in Saxony in 1923. Brandler-Thalheimer thereupon supported the Stalinist policy towards the Kuo Min Tang and the Anglo-Russian Committee. How can they deprive themselves of the opportunity to enlist under Barbusse's banner? If they didnt, their political physiognomy would not be rounded out.

tion of its readiness for a united front with the social democracy, but must demonstrate this readiness in deeds, enterprisingly, in a Bolshevik manner, by means Browder, smarting under the Opposition's Chinese Nationalist Commander, may of quite definite practical proposals and actions. That criticisms of his leadership of the party turn counter-revolutionary and join forces is just what we demand.

Gottwald's article, thanks to the fact that it rings to defend himself in particular and who, as we see, foresaw and warned and with a realistic and not an ultimatist tone, instantly Stalinism in general in the question of fought resolutely, printed a belated found an echo among the social democratic workers: On July 31 there appeared in Rude Pravo a letter, among others, from an unemployed printer who had of 1927," writes Browder, "the writer recently returned from a visit to Germany. The let- of this article was in Hankow-when ter bears the imprint of a worker-democrat who is un- the decisive issues of armament or disdoubtedly affilicted with the prejudices of reformism. first became a sharp issue within the All the more important is it to pay attention to how Communist party. In view of the fact the policy of the German Communist Party reflects it- that the Trotskyites in America have self in his consciousness. "When in the spring of last systematically spread slanders about myyear," thus writes the printer, "comrade Breitscheid self in relation to that period, attemptdirected to the Communist party the appeal to begin legend that the Chinese party and the joint actions with the social democracy, he evoked in Communist International, including 'the the Rote Fahne a veritable storm of indignation. So American Stalinist, Browder', failed to the social democratic workers said to themselves: 'Now carry on a resolute struggle against we know how serious are the intentions of the Communists on the united front'."

Here you have the genuine voice of a worker. Such a voice contributes more to the solution of the question than dozens of articles by unprincipled penpushers. As a matter of fact, Breitscheid didn't pro- on a resolute struggle against Chiang pose any united front. He only frightened the bourgeoisie with the possibility of joint actions with the Communists.... Had the Central Committee of the Communist party promptly put the question right on the edge of the knife, the social democratic party leadership would have been pushed into a difficult position. But the Central Committee of the Communist party hastened, as always, to put itself into a difficult posi-

In the brochure What Next?, I happened to write of the land. This statement was printon Breitscheid's speech: "Isn't it self-evident that ea m English in the magazine Chinese Breitscheid's diplomatic and equivocal offer should Correspondence published at that time in have been grabbed with both hands; and that from one's own side, one should have submitted a concrete, statement at that time, we do not know. carefully detailed and practical program for a joint It would be interesting to read it, of struggle against Fascism; and have demanded joint that we have no doubt. But it is not sessions of the executives of both parties, with the participation of the executives of the independent trade unions? Simultaneously, one should have carried material on that score. More important ants for a real struggle against the energetically this same program down through all the than that, is the even more damning traitors and vacillators !- M. S.). The layers of both parties and of the masses." (Page 56.) record of the whole official policy of the Communists must not leave the Kuo Min

By spurning the trial balloon of the reformist lead- revolution, which Browder's latest in- elements instead. Workers must enter ers, the Central Committee of the Communist party transformed in the minds of the workers the ambiguous assertion of Breitscheid into a direct united front proposal and prompted the social democratic workers to the conclusion: "Our people want joint actions, but the Communists are sabotaging." Can you imagine a more inappropriate and stupider policy? Could Breitscheid's manœuver be better supported? The letter from the Prague printer demonstrates with remarkable plainness that, with Thälmann's aid, Breitscheid completely attained his goal.

Rude Pravo endeavors to perceive contradiction phic course followed by the Comintern tionary Kuo Min Tang in Wuhan will be and confusion in the fact that in one case we reject in China. What puts him forever be- transformed into an organ of the revan agreement, but in another, we acknowledge it and youd the pale of forgiveness of the Stal- olutionary-democratic dictatorship of the the victory of Chinese Bolshevism. deem it necssary to determine anew each time the scope, the slogans and the methods of the agreement. great defeat was to be found in the Worker, May 13, 1927.) RUDE PRAVO does not understand that in politics, as policy imposed upon the Chinese Comin all other serious fields, one must know well: what, munists by Stalin and Co., that his own plary fidelity, the Daily Worker editorial when, where and how. Also it cannot hurt to under-

In our Criticism of the Program of the Comintern simply part of the notorious Stalinist ment, is growing stronger each day". four years ago, we set down a few elementary rules system of manufacturing scapegoats. for the united front policy. We consider it worth while to recall them here:

"The possibility of betrayal is always imbedded in reformism. That does not mean, of course, that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at ly the official policy of the international every moment. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists, if they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when they commit treason shortly before the development of a movement, signifies a criminal carelessness towards the traitors and a veiling of betrayal." (The Strategy of the World Revolution, page 51.)

"The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every manœuver says: One's own' party organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another; no matter how 'friendly' the latter may still be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination the party to other parties or to organizations of other classes and therewith limits the freedom of one's own agitation, or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. Chiang Kai-Shek remains in command see how easily our Stalinists "perceived" You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner." (Ibid, pp. 60-61.)

Today, after the experience with the Barbusse Congress, we would add still another rule:

"Agreements should be reached only openly, before the eyes of the masses, from party to party, from organiation to organization. You shall not avail yourself of equivocal middlemen. You shall not palm off diplomatic affairs with bourgeois pacifists as a proletarian united front."

PRINKIPO, September 2, 1932.

L. TROTSKY.

October Young Spartacus the Anti-War Congress, the activities of comemmoration of the anniversary of the the Spartacus Youth Clubs. The spe-Russian Revolution is planned for the Now OUT

Illinois miners' convention, Youth and which will be devoted primarily to the cents a year).

cial educational features consist of an first week of November. This issue will olution, toward Sun-Yat-Senism and article in Prayda points out Feng Yuarticle on John Reed and a review of be an eight pager-the regular size of loyalty to the Kuo Min Tang, are dis- Hsiang has passed into the camp of the The October issue of the Young Spar. the History of the First International by subsequent numbers of the Young Spar- tinguished from his former statements enemies of the people's revolution" (July

Browder

Now that the Daily Worker has "corrected its mistake" in appealing to the workers to protest against the arrest and possible execution of comrade Chen Du-Hsiu in Shanghai, the leader of the party, Earl Browder, endeavors in the first quotation which guarantees not issue of October 21 to explain to his the slightest suspicion of inner con-Chinese revolution and that the arrest page two, April 15, 1927, under a Most the liberation movement is not decisive." of this "Trotskyist is no concern of cow date line that "grave fears are felt the working class. At the same time, here that General Chiang Kai-Shek, the and our exposure of his role in China with Chang Tso Lin and the Northernduring the 1927 events, takes occasion ers.", while on page one, the editors the great tragedy of the Chinese revolu- Shanghai report that "General Chiang tion of 1925-1927.

armament of the workers and peasants ing with all their power to create the Chiang Kai-Shek, it may not be out of place to take this occasion to call attention to the records."

And what are the "records" which disprove the "legend" that the Communist International (i. e., the Browders of all shapes and magnitudes) failed to carry Kai-Shek? We read on:

BROWDER'S RECORDS

"These show that in April, in the period when Chen Tuh-siu was actively and bitterly fighting for the disarmament of the workers and peasants, I wrote a statement for the All-China Federation of Labor energetically calling for the further armament of the workers and peasants and the development of seizure

First, what Browder wrote in his needed for an estimation of Browder's position in China during that period, for we have at our disposal fairly adequate

leaders of the Chinese Left Opposition. masses." there is this to be said: With a spirit of of which Browder is totally incapable, Feng, the successors to Chiang Kai-Shek of the responsibility for the catastro- best disciple of Lenin"; "The revoluinists is the fact that he revealed with projetariat and peasantry by a decisive indisputable facts that the source of the struggle against imperialism." mistake consisted in following it out to of May 19, 1927 told its readers that the letter. The structures now directed "the Hankow government, the genuine

And now, back to Browder and his 'resolute struggle" of the Comintern. For the moment, we shall quote from a responsible source, the Daily Worker of the time, which merely echoed faithfulleadership (all emphasis is ours).

DAILY WORKER AND CHIANG KAI-SHEK

On April 4, 1927, with the whole bour- page 32, which quotes an authentic regeois press talking about Chiang's pre- port of his speech in Hankow on April parations for counter-revolution, the 2: "Earl Browder, delegate from Amer-Daily Worker lulled its readers to sleep, ica, spoke next.... greeting the gathput them off their guard, and assured all ering as the highest organ of the Chinese and sundry that there was no danger revolution". What gathering? The Enfrom Chiang Kai-Shek or of a crists larged Political Council of the Kuo Min breaking out in the Kuo Min Tang. In Tang Central Executive Committee-the, its front page dispatch from Hankow, at that time, still combined treacherous it amounced: "Now that the crisis is cliques of Wang Chin Wei and Chiang past the Nationalist revolutionary move- Kai-Shek! ment is in a position to move on unhampered by the slightest suspicion of

And in its penetrating editorial com- blandly observed that "the defection of ment in the same issue: "There is going Feng Yu-Hsiang (was) an eventuality to be no split in the Kue Min Tang, easily to have been perceived". Let us Minneapolis of the drive on Peking, he accepts the it. While Feng was already negotiating authority of the Political Committee of the terms of the betrayal with Chiang the party, and the cleavage between the Kai-Shek, the D. W. editors again take part in the regular open forum Left and Right wings of the party upon "fought resolutely" by reassuring their meetings to be conducted throughout the which the imperialists have been building readers that "it is unlikely that after winter months at 1530 E. Franklin Ave., great hopes will not materialize at pre- having been sent to conclude a military 3 P. M. every Sunday afternoon. sent. The Chinese liberation movement alliance with Chiang Kai-Shek against following subjects are scheduled: is a unit against imperialism."

Isn't it clear how

lative to his faithfulness toward the rev- Chinese revolution, N. Bucharin in an and testify to the pressure of the revolu- 1, 1927). This is the same Bucharin

No more than eleven days after our the army of Feng Yu-Hsiang"!

The Arrest of Chen Du-Hsiu and THE STALINIST DEFENSE the Apologist of Stalin

Kai-Shek has gone over to the side of "During a part of the crucial period the imperialist powers conspiring to crush the revolutionary Nationalist movement."

WE" AND FENG YU-HSIANG

Chiang's "defection" was promptly explained away as a mere episode: "We" still had Hankow and Feng Yu-Hsiang. Bucharin, Browder's boss of yesterday, declared according to a Moscow dispatch in the Daily Worker of April 21, 1927: "We must remember that we (Ahem!!) have the army of Feng Yu-Hsiang, which, as yet, has not been brought into the fight. It is necessary to avoid forms and organizations that will give the imperialists cause to yell about 'the Sovietization of China' (read: that will mobilize the workers and peas-

PROTEST!

The leading militants of the Chinese Left Opposition have been arrested in Shanghai, with comrade Chen Du-Hsin, former secretary of the party, at their head. The sanguinary record of Chiang Kai-Shek leaves no doubt as to his intentions. The lives of our seven comrades are in real danger. The party leaders are display. ing a cynical indifference to the case. The I. L. D. leaders are doing likewise. The principle of International proletarian solidarity demands that we raise our volces in unmistakable protest against the imprisonment of these comrades. Militants, party members! Demand a change of front from the party and the I. L. D.! Demand a campaign for the release of the seven Bolshevik fighters of Shan.

Stalin-Bucharin faction in the Chinese Tang, but must push out the Right wing discretion in even speaking of himself the K. M. T. and bore from within, in this connection permits us to review never forgetting for a moment that Hankow is a Left government and a consi-Second, as to comrade Chen Du-Hsiu, derable part of the national army favors hidden in his trunk the letter of Wang the principal founder of the Chinese it and that Hankow will become more and Communist movement and one of the more the center for the workers and the

Thus Browder's boss of yesterday conrevolutionary responsibility and candor cerning the Wuhan government and comrade Chen some three years ago, is- in the bureaucrats' list of white hopes! sued an open letter to the Chinese Com- And here is what was said by Browmunists in which he took his full share der's boss of today, Stalin, the renowned

Following this guidance with exemat him by the apparatus scribblers are expression of the Chinese liberation move-

BROWDER'S GREETINGS IN HANKOW

And Browder? Did he, on the spit, give some warning to the Chinese masstaken from Browder's pamphlet of 1927,

Let us resume the thread: On July 7 1927, a week after Feng Yu-Hsiang's open treachery, the Daily Worker editorial the northern militarists, under the in-"resolute" was structions of the K. M. T. Central Com-Stalin's struggle against Chiang Kai- mittee; that Feng has done anything else Shek? For, we repeat, the Daily Worker than carry out his instructions". This merely echoed the rest of the official was in the issue of June 29, 1927. TWO press. When Chiang "pledged" himself DAYS LATER, the Daily Worker, which to be "loyal", in order to gain time for perceived, which warned, which fought his coup d'Etat. Pravda hailed him in resolutely, announced in a Moscow dis patch: "Branding Feng's alliance with "Chiang Kai-Shek's declarations re- Chiang Kai-Shek as a betrayal of the

But Wuhan! Oh, yes, there was still something for the sinking Stalinists to grab hold of! "Wuhan has not yet fallen", "in spite of the predictions of readers that comrade Chen betrayed the flict", the Daily Worker announced on the imperialists....the present crisis of

> The rest can really be guessed: A brief eleven days later, the Daily Worker of July 16, 1927 bore a headline: "Denounce Wuhan Government As Workers' Enemy. Third International Demands Action." But action is difficult to get from workers and peasants bleeding to death under the ax of every bourgecis nationalist secundrel in whom the Comintern leaders taught the Chinese masses to put their trust.

> This horrible record could be prolonged indefinitely. But enough has been printed to show what the "resolute struggle" looked like in reality, and precisely who it is that, trusting to the short memorics of his readers, is creating legends about the Chinese revolution.

> A final word. Browder pretends to an honest indignation which the calloused bureaucrat is really incapable of experiencing. Let us therefore reprint the glowing letter of introduction signed on June 3, 1927 in Hankow by Pang Chek-min, head of the Oversea Department of the C. E. C. of the Hankow Kuo Min Tang, and addressed to the "Dear Comrades" of the reactionary Kuo Min Tang gang in Oakland, Calif.:

> "I have the honor to introduce to you Mr. Browder, the American delegation of Pan-Pacific Labor Conference. now returns to America from China where he has given a great deal of help to the Kuo Min Tang and the Nationalist Government. I hope you and all of the branches welcome him and introduce him to the branches of Kuo Min Tang in America."

BROWDER EARNS HIS PRAISE

We do not know the exact nature of the 'great deal of help' which the Chinese bourgeoisie appreciated so warmly in Hankow. But we have not the slightest doubt that Browder richly earned the hearty introduction and appreciation of Messrs, Wang Chin Wei and Co. In any case, such a letter, if it was written because of what Browder calls his "resolute struggie", was obtained from the Hankow hourgeoisie under false pret-

Browder now loftily informs his readers that our comrade Chen Du-Hsiu's arrest is nothing for workers to worry over, that "he is much closer to the group of Wang Chin Wei, with which he who slanders the Chinese revolutionist and winks to the Chinese counter-revolution that the Stalinists will not interfere Chin Wei and Co., which forever stigmatizes the role Browder played in China in his time. If his latest intervention in the Chinese situation is less pernicious in its effects, it is no less reactionary and base. Every man to his part.

As for us, we shall fight to prevent the assassination of comrade Chen and the other Oppositionists, for it is a fight for the victory of what the Stalinists did their utmost to destroy in its infancy,

-MAX SHACHTMAN.

MEETINGS

Philadelphia

Comrade B. Morgenstern will speak at 4035 Girard Avenue, Philadelphia, on Saturday, October 29, 8 P. M., on the subject of "Why All Young Workers "knowing" the situation-did he perhaps Should Vote Communist". The meeting express some skepticism about Hankow, is under the auspices of the Philly about Wang Chin Wei and Co., did he branch of the Communist League of America and is one of a series which is es? Here, if you please, is the record, to be held. Admission to this meeting is ten cents and all workers, particu-"Civil War in Nationalist China", on larly the young, are cordially invited.

The next evening, on October 30, comrade Morgenstern will speak at the Liberal Forum, 911 W. Girard Avenue, on "The Significance of the Recent Expulsions in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union". This timely subject should arouse considerable interest and bring many workers to attend. Admission is free and questions will be arranged for at the end of the lecture.

On November 12, Max Shachtman, editor of the Militant, will speak in Philadelphia on the outcome of the German elections. Watch for future an-

The Minneapolis branch of the Communist League is inviting all workers to

October 30: "The Community Fund Drive", with Sara Avrin speaking.

November 6: "City Relief. Political Parties and the Tax Amendment" with Clem Forsen as speaker.

November 13: "The Move for New Wage Cuts in the Railroad Industry" with C. R. Hedlund speaking. Other meetings will be announced re-

gularly. Admission is free and all are urged

weeks. It contains articles on the presidential elections, the German situation, tion of the issue. The November number scribe to the Young Spartacus (fifty 1927.)

A HALF-YEAR SUB TO THE MILL.

Readers of The Militant should subtionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that "we must remember that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that "we must remember that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that "we must remember that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that "we must remember that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before that "we must remember that we have the first of the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, who smugly boasted a few weeks before the pressure of the revolutionary rank and file." (March 16, A HALF-YEAR SUB TO THE MILI.