

Declaration of International Left Opposition to Left Socialist Conference

DECLARATION OF THE DELEGATION OF BOLSHIEVIK-LENINISTS AT THE CONFERENCE OF LEFT-SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS. THE COLLAPSE OF BOTH INTERNATIONALS

Despite the evident disintegration of world capitalism as an economic and social system, the workers' movement of the world is now passing through a deeper crisis than after the smashing of the Paris Commune, or during the imperialist war. Two working class parties of the most industrial country of Europe, the social-democratic and the Communist parties which led behind them 13 million voters, capitulated without a fight before the Fascist regime. Two Internationals were subjected to a test and proved bankrupt.

The social-democratic bankruptcy of which became apparent in the imperialist war of 1914-1918 tried to reconstitute its ranks on the morrow of the world catastrophe thereby hindering the workers from going over to Communism and to the Third International. The defeat of the German social-democracy confirms that reformism which has brought the Second International to disarray can and could lead the workers only to new catastrophes. The social-democracy which held on to the end of the rotting capitalism was itself drawn into the process of decay. However the Third International whose task it was to organize the forces of the proletariat for a revolutionary rise against the bourgeoisie of all the countries and for the victory of socialism has also failed in its task. It fell victim to bureaucratic centrism which is based on the theory and practice of Socialism in one country; in a word, it was wrecked by a system of errors which entered into history under the name of Stalinism.

At the time when capitalism, torn by world contradictions, placed the international revolution on the order of the day the Comintern became only a submissive and impotent chorus to the conservative and nationally limited bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. Thousands of Communists are now trying in Hitler's Germany to save the official party by continuing the old policy under the new conditions. With all our revolutionary sympathy for the self-sacrificing fighters we must tell them that wrongly directed efforts and sacrifices will be fruitless. Under the conditions of Fascist terror the Stalinist policy is doomed to a complete smash-up within a short time. An illegal revolutionary party in Germany must be built on new foundations.

After the living march of events had shown that Fascism and the social-democracy, the two polar tools of the bourgeois regime, exclude each other not only politically but physically, it was necessary to put the simple conclusion of this experience as the basis for all our international agitation pushing the social-democracy to the path of a united front with Communist parties. Despite all evidence, the bureaucracy of the Comintern proclaimed the firmness of the theory of social-Fascism and having completely blocked itself thereby the approach to the reformist mass organizations, it substituted masquerade blocs with impotent circles of pacifists and adventurists for the proletarian policy of the united front. If the lesson of the German catastrophe did not help the Stalinist bureaucracy, nothing will help it. New national parties and a new international is necessary.

THE POSITION OF THE BOLSHIEVIK-LENINISTS

The participants to the present conference are of different political origin. Some split off in recent years from the parties of the Second International; there are finally some of a mixed or intermediary origin. Some acted as independent parties, others considered themselves and worked as fractions. If these organizations came together today for the first time at a common conference to try and find bases for joint work, all of them have by this very fact openly admitted the necessity for the welding together of the proletarian vanguard on new foundations.

With regard to Germany our international organization (Bolshevik-Leninists) has after serious and heated debates almost unanimously adopted this position. With regard to the Comintern as a whole, the question was formally placed by us for discussion only within the last couple of weeks. We are speaking here in the name of the International Plenum of the Bolshevik-Leninists which has approved this declaration. Our national sections have not as yet had time to fully express themselves. But the question has been prepared to such an extent by the foregoing development of events as well as by the development of the Left Opposition itself; that we have no doubt as to the verdict of our organizations. At any rate the final word belongs to our sections.

Some participants of the present conference are probably of the opinion that we came to the break with the Stalinist bureaucracy with unnecessary belatedness. It is not the place here to return to the old disputes. The fact, however, is such that our policy having taken into consideration objective conditions and not subjective moods, has given us the possibility to form stable organizations of Bolshevik-Leninists in more than twenty countries. Although in their majority they are cadres and not mass organizations, their invaluable advantage lies in the fact that they are

based on an international scale by a unity of programmatic and strategic conception which has evolved gradually from the experiences of great events and from the struggle of the proletariat.

THE STRUGGLE WITH REFORMISM.

From what has been said already, it is clear, that the break with the Stalinist bureaucracy by no means makes our attitude to reformism less sharp. On the contrary, it is more irreconcilable now than ever before. We see the chief historic crime of the Stalinist bureaucracy precisely in that, by its whole policy it renders an invaluable aid to social-democracy and hinders the proletariat from going over to the path of revolution.

For us, Bolshevik-Leninists, and we trust, also for all of you there can even be no thought of constant work in common with organizations which have not broken with the principle foundations of reformism, which continue to hope for the regeneration of the social democracy as a party or which consider the unification of the Second and Third Internationals as their mission. Groupings permeated by such tendencies can only pull the workers backwards. And we, basing ourselves on all the lessons of the past, we want to go forward.

The "21 conditions" for the acceptance to the Communist International elaborated in its time by Lenin for the purpose of a decisive separation from all types of

:BOOK REVIEW:

U. S. S. R. and World Revolution, by M. T. Florinsky, MacMillan Co. \$2.50.

Somebody, sooner or later, was bound to write this book. To readers of the *Militant*, however, there will be little in it that he or she is not already acquainted with.

Written from a professional-objective (above the classes) point of view, the book does manage to give a fairly accurate picture of the attitude of the Soviet government, the party and the Communist International leadership to the question of World Revolution from the earliest days of the Dictatorship to the present. Mr. Florinsky has, in fact, confined his book to examining that one particular question... so small task in itself.

As would be apparent, any effort at approaching the question of World Revolution would of necessity bring in the struggle between Stalin and Trotsky—or to express it in a less personal manner—between Socialism in One Country and the Permanent Revolution. The author used as his main sources of reference the theses and statutes of all the six congresses of the Comintern, and comrade Trotsky's Permanent Revolution and the French edition of "The Communist International After Lenin." (The Criticism of the Draft Program, Strategy of the World Revolution).

After explaining and quoting with an air degree of accuracy from these documents, Mr. Florinsky comes to some conclusions: The first years of the Russian revolution he characterizes as the "heroic" period. It was a period when of a sudden a group of revolutionists—world revolutionists—had suddenly seized the reins of power in a country the size of one-sixth of the earth's surface. Inspired by their sudden success and still mindful of the teachings of that "bearded German professor with a black frock coat" they saw the revolution as only one link in the chain forged for the inevitable world revolution.

The author looks back upon those early revolutionary utterances of Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek with a relieved, if somewhat superior and tolerant, feeling. It was, at least, not without a certain "grandeur"—and it was "heroic." True the Marxism of it was a little closer to the latter than the present day Stalinist brand. True enough the Communist International of those days was much more of a threat to the world bourgeoisie than the present edition of it. But, forgives Mr. Florinsky, those were "romantic" days in a "heroic" period. Let us not quibble with the author if he fails to see the whys and the wherefores of the events of 1923 in Germany. Or the raison d'etre for the fascos in Hungary, Finland, etc. Others who make greater claim to being Communists have not been able to analyze the distinction between the objective and the subjective factors in the revolution as related to the party and the class.

What is important, however, is that the author is able to distinguish between a revolutionary utterance and a nationalist utopian one. Though he wouldn't call it utopian—but sober. With the decline of the "romantic" era, continues our author, an era of sober and responsible stock-taking took place. Stalin came forward with the theory (bless the mark!) of Socialism in One Country, Trotsky reaffirmed the vitality and moving force of the theory of Permanent Revolution. Mr. Florinsky recognizes that the latter theory has much more Marxist logic than the former, but—the former (Socialism in One Country) is more sound state policy. So far as the author is concerned, a shift from the policy of World Revolution (the U. S. S. R. as the first fortress of the world revolution) was bound to take place—and needless to say, he welcomes it. As Mr. Florinsky would have it, it was the necessity of keeping Russia in step with the progress and development akin to all nations, that is, finding a mar-

reformism and anarchism, acquire at this stage again an urgent character. It is of course not a question of the text of this document which should be radically changed in accordance with the conditions of the modern period but of its general spirit of revolutionary Marxist irreconcilability.

Only under the condition of irreconcilable separation from reformism is it possible and necessary to enter into friendly cooperation with all those proletarian organizations which are actually developing from reformism towards Communism. We condemn and reject categorically the mode of actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy which treats as "left social-Fascists" all revolutionary organizations which—by the fault of the Comintern—find themselves outside the Comintern, and on the morrow of a catastrophe next in turn touchingly invites them into the Comintern as "sympathizing" parties. The Comintern is capable only of decomposing and destroying proletarian organizations but not of strengthening and educating them. The cooperation which we have in mind presupposes an honest attitude to facts, ideas, mutual comradely criticism and respect for each other.

THE FIRST FOUR CONGRESSES OF THE COMINTERN.

Revolutionary policy is unthinkable without revolutionary theory. Here we need least of all to start from the beginning. We stand on the basis of Marx and Engels. The first congresses of the Communist International left us an invaluable programmatic heritage: the character of the modern epoch as an epoch of imperialism; that is of capitalist decline; the nature of modern reformism and the methods of struggle with it; the relation between democracy and proletarian

ism, guaranteeing peace, etc., etc., that prompted the U. S. S. R. to abandon its original "heroics". That real peace can be guaranteed for the U. S. S. R. by the world revolution, never for a moment occurs to professor Florinsky.

Seeing clearly that the Stalinist has abandoned world revolution for Socialism in One Country the author quotes the following from *Izvestia* of February 8, 1933: "Litvinov's declaration not only is aimed against intervention in a country where there is no revolution, but in the name of the U. S. S. R. undertakes the obligation not to intervene in a country where there is a counter-revolution." No wonder that this former czarist and present professor of Columbia can exclaim: "... what an extraordinary attitude for the knights errant of world revolution." Truly extraordinary! What a convenient promise to Hitler!

Towards the end of his book, Mr. Florinsky poses the following question: "Which of the two speaks for the real Russia of to-day? Is it the bearded and black frocked Ger-flo-rin-sky poses the following question, their 'general' and 'inevitable' revolutionary situations, their inevitable downfall of capitalism? Or is it the young workmen and peasants awkwardly approaching new machines and tractors... standing dazzled by the wonders of the future as unfolded by their (present) leaders (Stalin, Molotov et al.)."

The author's happy conclusion is Mr. comrade Walter Duranty's whom he quotes as follows: "... the Bolshevik Kremlin to-day regards the growth of the revolutionary movement in Europe with real anxiety." *Times*, November 20, 1932. If it is hard for the workers to understand Stalin; the Campbells, Florinskys and Durantys do not find such hardships.

—MARTIN GLEE.

dictatorship; the role of the party in the proletarian revolution; the relation between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie, especially the peasantry (agrarian question); the problem of nationalities and the liberation struggle of colonial peoples; work in the trade unions; the policy of the united front; the policy of parliamentarism, etc.—all these questions have been subjected to a principled analysis by the first four congresses which has remained unsurpassed until now.

One of the first, most urgent tasks of those organizations which have inscribed on their banners the re-generation of the revolutionary movement consists in separating from the general mass the principle decisions of the first four congresses, in bringing them in order and in subjecting them to a serious discussion in the light of the future tasks of the proletariat: the present conference must, in our opinion, indicate the ways and the first steps of this necessary work.

STRATEGICAL LESSONS OF THE LAST DECADE.

The political life of the proletariat vanguard did not stop at the first congresses of the Communist International. Under the influence of historic circumstances, that is, of the march of the class struggle, the apparatus of the Comintern has completely gone over from Marxism to Centrism, from internationalism to national limitedness. If the building of the Third International was impossible without cleansing the teachings of Marx from the layers of reformism, so now the creation of revolutionary parties of the proletariat is unthinkable without cleansing the principles and methods of Communism from the layers and falsifications of bureaucratic centrism.

The struggle of the Left Opposition against the oscillations of the Stalinist apparatus connected with numerous and heavy sacrifices is imprinted in a series of documents of a programmatic and strategic character. In accordance with the most important political stages of the last decade the following problems have been illuminated in these documents: the economic construction of the U. S. S. R.; the party regime; the policy of the united front (Anglo-Russian Committee, on one side; the German experience, on the other); the path of the Spanish revolution ("democratic dictatorship"); the fight against war; the fight against Fascism, etc. The basic conclusions of this ten year struggle are given in a form of a synopsis in the "11 points" of the International Pre-Conference of the Left Opposition. We are submitting this programmatic document here to your attention.

It is superfluous to say that on our part, we will consider with the greatest attention all the theses, resolutions and programmatic declarations in which other organizations represented here have expressed or may express their estimation of the tasks and perspectives. We do not want anything so much as the mutual exchange of experience and ideas. We wish to state with great satisfaction that the "Declaration of Principles" of the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland concurs on all the basic questions with the platform of the International Left Opposition.

The present pre-conference cannot of course discuss with the necessary profundity the programmatic and strategic lessons of the world time to make a start. We permit ourselves to express the wish that each of the organizations represented here reprint our "11 points" in their press with the necessary commentaries, and that afterwards the possibility be given us to defend our theses in the same press in discussion order. On our part we obligate ourselves to publish for the information and discussion of our sections every programmatic

document which may be introduced by other organizations and shall willingly give to the defenders of the document corresponding space in our press.

THE U. S. S. R.

The question of the U. S. S. R. is of exceptional importance to the workers movement of the world and therefore also to the correct orientation of the present conference. We, Bolshevik-Leninists, consider the U. S. S. R. even in its present form as a workers' State. This estimation needs no illusions or embellishment.

One cannot feel anything but contempt for those "friends" of the U. S. S. R. who declare every work of criticism against the Soviet bureaucracy as a counter-revolutionary act. If revolutionists had been guided by such rules of conduct, the October revolution would have never taken place.

We reject as a mockery of Marxist thought, the Brandlerian position according to which the policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy represents a chain of errors in all other countries, but remains infallible in the U. S. S. R. Such a "theory" is based on the negation of the general principles of proletarian policy and brings the International down to a mere sum total of national parties the leaders of which are always ready to close their eyes to mutual sins. A Marxian can have nothing in common with this social-democratic conception.

The policy of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the U. S. S. R. is of the same principle nature as the policy of the Comintern. The dif-

ference lies not in methods but in objective conditions: In the U. S. S. R. the bureaucracy bases itself on the foundations laid by the proletarian revolution, and if in a decade it succeeded in squandering the capital of the Comintern, in the U. S. S. R. it has undermined but not liquidated the foundations of the socialist state. The Soviet proletariat, practically deprived of the party, trade unions and Soviets which were seized by the bureaucracy, defends by its revolutionary traditions the workers' state from a bourgeois overturn.

To identify the social order of the U. S. S. R. with "state capitalism" or German type, is to ignore the main question of the social order, namely the property character and to open the doors wide to false and dangerous conclusions. On this question there can be for us no ambiguities and no compromises. The defense of the workers' state from imperialism and counter-revolution remains as heretofore the duty of every revolutionary worker. But to serve this defense does not at all mean to become a tool of Soviet diplomacy.

The acts and declarations of Soviet diplomacy have provoked not only the trade unions radically or critically inclined workers, if they cannot be bribed by remunerative positions; on the other hand, it frees its ministers, parliamentarians, journalists and prof-bureaucrats from submitting to discipline with regard to the party. The combined methods of repression, betrayal and bribery permit the social-democracy to retain the semblance of discussions, elections, control etc., while remaining at the same time the apparatus of the imperialist bourgeoisie within the working class.

Discussion on the N. R. A. and the Slogan of Nationalization

This article deals with a subject which has not formerly been discussed in the *Militant*, it is therefore accepted explicitly as a discussion article. The views expressed are those of the writer. Other contributions in discussion of this subject are invited, but they should not exceed 700 words—Ed.

(Continued from last issue)

In answer to the industrial codes adopted by the capitalists in their desperate organized attempt to bring about "recovery" from the crisis, the Communists have now the task, with the aid of the workers in the several industries, of laying out specific workers' codes of action. But before proceeding with a model of such a code of action as applied to coal mining and involving the slogans of nationalization and workers' control, it may help to forestall first of all objections raised against these slogans "in principle".

No field offers greater danger of blundering and of falling into opportunism than that of partial demands and intermediate slogans. Nevertheless the Communist does not reject such demands and slogans in toto just because there is this danger. A criterion for the choice of our tactics and slogans was given by Lenin in his brochure on Left Communism: "The whole point lies in being able to apply these tactics to raise and not to lower the general level of proletarian class-consciousness and revolutionary ability to fight and conquer." Thus the decision as to the correctness or incorrectness of a slogan rests to a large extent on our judgment of the ripeness or unripeness, not of the advanced workers but of the mass of workers to rally around and fight for a given slogan. Our purpose is not to sink to the level of the backward masses, not to hide the truth from them by sinking into opportunism, not to win them over to false slogans and to a false ideology, but to take into account as an objective factor for us, the Communists, the present mood, state of consciousness and preparedness of the class as a whole.

Life alone is the final arbiter in the matter of choice of tactics. Literature is never decisive, but it can be extremely helpful if properly understood and applied. In this sense it would be a worthwhile task to collate all the writings, particularly since the formation of the Comintern, on the questions of nationalization and workers' control. For particularly at the present moment in America, with events moving at tremendous speed, with the working class commencing anew its lessons in organization first of all in trade unions, with the posing of economic and political problems to the workers on a vaster scale than ever before in American history, it is of vital importance that we understand their true dialectic nature, their usefulness in elevating the plane of struggle at the proper moment from that of immediate and intermediate demands to that of power, and consequently their proper place in the strategy of revolution.

The Struggle Against Ultra-Leftism

These on Partial Demands and Intermediate Slogans were adopted by the Leninist Third and Fourth Congresses of the Comintern. Just before the Third Congress Lenin gave cognizance to the sharp ultra-Leftist trend in the international movement with Bucharin as its foremost theoretician in the Soviet Union. Lenin wrote his pamphlet on "Left Communism" to combat this infantile and had it distributed among the delegates to the Third Congress in order to alter the "intransigent" attitude of some towards partial demands and slogans. So much did the false position of Bucharin and others

took the unprecedented step of announcing at the Congress that he spoke in favor of the theses proposed on partial demands only under the discipline of his fraction. Between the Third and Fourth Congresses, Lenin, Trotsky, Radek and Zinoviev carried on a struggle against the ultra-Leftist position to such good purpose that at the Fourth Congress Bucharin himself was forced to read a Declaration in which the Russian fraction announced that they considered as false and incorrect the view expressed on partial demands, the idea that these were opportunistic in the Third Congress theses.

In his desire to correct the views which had caused Bucharin and others to attack Lenin and Trotsky as Rightists and opportunists at the Third Congress, Lenin posed the questions at issue in the simplest yet sharpest terms. For example: "Communists, adherents of the Third International, exist in all countries precisely for the purpose of adapting, along the whole line in every domain of life, the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist and parliamentarian activities to the new Communist idea." Again: "We do not know and we cannot know which of the inflammable sparks which now fly in all countries, fanned by the economic and political world crisis, will be the one to start the conflagration (in the sense of a particular awakening of the masses); we are therefore bound to utilize our new Communist principles in the cultivation of all and every field of endeavor no matter how old, rotten, and seemingly hopeless."

What were the specific issues in the controversy over partial demands? Radek, working closely together with Lenin and Trotsky at that time, proposed for capitalist countries (particularly but not solely for Germany), the ideas of partial nationalization of capitalist property (nationalization of trusts), workers' government, workers' control of production. These slogans were not given for the future when a revolutionary situation would once more arise, but for the period preceding it and which is preparing it. And in view of the existence of the separate organizations of the working masses at that time (2nd, 2nd and one-half, 3rd Internationals, and social democratic trade unions), Radek proposed the adoption of the United Front tactic to carry out these slogans. Bucharin was so much opposed to the United Front tactic as to the slogans to which this tactic was to be applied. In the settling of this controversy, it was carried before an enlarged Plenum of the C. I. in Dec. 1921 when for the first time the C. I. gave its formal adherence to the tactic of the United Front despite the argument of Bucharin that this essentially class slogan might become, in a pre-revolutionary situation, a cover for class collaboration.

The argument against intermediate slogans as being essentially class collaboration (including that against the United Front), would be correct if these slogans are divorced from the slogans involving the struggle for power and for the seizure of industries and these latter from a real mass struggle. To hide our real views and ultimate goal would be to practice opportunism. At all times we warn the workers that their final salvation under capitalism is an utter illusion, that even the partial nationalization of any industry cannot help the working class in any final sense, that only the workers can achieve their own emancipation, and only by the overthrow of the capitalist system and the seizure of all industries by the workers.

—JACK WEBER.
(To Be Continued)

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