

# The I. L. P. & the New International

After a brief interval I am returning again to the policy of the Independent Labor Party. This is occasioned by the declaration of the delegation of the I. L. P. at the Paris conference which permits a clear idea of the general tendency of the I. L. P., as well as of the stage at which now it finds itself.

The delegation considers it necessary to call a World Congress of "all" revolutionary parties beginning with those adhering to the Third International. "If the Third International proves unprepared to change its tactics and organization, the time will have come to consider the formation of a new International." This phrase contains the very essence of the present policy of the I. L. P. Having shifted decisively to the left, to Communism the members of this party refuse to believe that the Communist International which disposes of numerous cadres, of material and technical means, is lost for the revolutionary movement. It is necessary, they say, to make one more test of the ability or inability of the Comintern to change its policy.

## Working Class "Parliamentarism"

It is incorrect, even naive, to pose the question in this manner. The ability or inability of a party is not determined at a Congress but in daily struggle, and particularly, in time of great dangers, momentous decisions and mass action. After the victory of Hitler for which the Comintern bears a direct responsibility, the leadership of the Comintern had not only left its policy unchanged but on the contrary has intensified its disastrous methods. This historic test weighs a thousand times more than all the declarations of the representatives of the Comintern might make at any one Congress. It must not be forgotten that Congresses represent elements of "parliamentarism" in the workers' movement itself. While parliamentarism is inevitable and necessary it cannot add anything fundamentally new above what has been actually attained in mass struggle. This refers not only to parliamentarism of the bourgeois state but also to the "parliamentary" institutions of the proletariat itself. We must orientate ourselves by the real activity of working class organizations and not expect any miracles from the proposed World Congress.

During a period of ten years (1923-1933) the Left Opposition acted as a fraction of the Comintern hoping to attain an improvement in its policy and regime by systematic criticism and an active participation in the life of the Comintern and its sections. The Left Opposition therefore has a colossal experience of an international character. There was not a single important historic event which did not force the L. O. to counterpose its slogans and methods to the slogans and methods of the bureaucracy of the Comintern. The struggle around the questions of Soviet economy and the regime in the Communist party of the Soviet Union, the Chinese revolution, Anglo-Russian committee, etc., etc. remained to the workers' parties of the West\*. But two chapters of this struggle passed before the eyes of the advanced workers of all the world: they deal with the theory and practice of the "third period" and with the strategy of the Comintern in Germany.

## No Impatience in L. O.

If the Left Opposition can be blamed for anything, it is certainly not for an impatient break with the Comintern. Only after the German Communist party which has been gathering millions of votes, proved incapable of offering even the least resistance to Hitler, and the Comintern refused not only to recognize the erroneousess of its policy but even the very fact of the defeat of the proletariat (in reality the victory of Hitler is the greatest defeat of the world!) and replaced the analysis of its mistakes and crimes by a new campaign of persecution and slander against real Marxists—only after this did we say: nothing can save these people any more. The German catastrophe, and the role of the Comintern in it, is infinitely more important for the world proletariat than any organizational maneuvers, congresses evasive declarations, diplomatic agreements, etc. The historical judgment on the Comintern has been pronounced. There is no appeal from this verdict.

The history of the Comintern is almost unknown to the members of the I. L. P. which has just recently taken the revolutionary path. Besides no organization learns only by books and files. The I. L. P. wants independently to undergo an experience that was made by others on a much larger scale. Had this involved only the loss of a few months, one could have reconciled oneself to it despite the fact that each month of our time is much more than years of another. The danger, however, lies therein that aspiring to "inherit" the Comintern by a closer drawing together to it, the I. L. P. may follow unnoticed by itself the ways of the Comintern—and ruin itself.

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THE MILITANT  
126 East 16th St. N. Y. C.

## A Criticism of Its Paris Declaration by Leon Trotsky

The trade union question remains the most important question of proletarian policy of Great Britain as well as of the majority of old capitalist countries. In this field the mistakes of the Comintern are innumerable. No wonder: the inability of a party to establish correct relations with the class reveals itself most glaringly in the trade union movement. That is why I consider it necessary to dwell on this problem.

The trade unions were formed during the period of the growth and rise of capitalism. They had as their task the raising of the material and cultural level of the proletariat and the extension of its political rights. This work that lasted in England over a century clothed the trade unions with a tremendous authority among the workers. The decay of British capitalism under the conditions of the decline of the world capitalist system, undermined the basis for the reformist work of the trade unions. Capitalism can maintain itself longer only by lowering the standard of living of the working class. Under these conditions the trade unions could either transform themselves into revolutionary organizations or become the helpers of capitalism in the intensified exploitation of the workers. The trade union bureaucracy which solved satisfactorily its own social problem took the second path. It turned the whole accumulated authority of the trade unions against the socialist revolution and even against any attempts of the workers to resist the attacks of capital and reaction.

## The Most Important Task

Henceforth the liberation of the workers from the reactionary influence of the trade union bureaucracy has become the most important task of a revolutionary party. In this decisive field the Comintern revealed a complete inadequacy. During the years 1926-27 and first of all during the miners' strike and the general strike, that is, at the time of the greatest crises and betrayals of the General Council of the trade unions, the Comintern obsequiously toiled before the honorable strike-breakers covering them up before the masses by its authority and helping them to remain in saddle: thus, a mortal blow was struck at the "minority movement". Frightened by the results of its work, the bureaucrats of the Comintern went to the extreme of ultra-rightism: the fatal excesses of the "third period" were due to the desire of the small Communist minority to act in a manner presupposing that they had a majority behind them. Isolating itself more and more from the working class, the Communist party counterposed to the trade unions embracing millions of workers its own trade union organizations, most obedient to the leadership of the Comintern but separated by an abyss from the working class. No better favor could be done to the trade union bureaucracy. Had it disposed of the Order of the Garter it should have decorated all the leaders of the Comintern and the Profintern with it.

As was said, the trade unions now play not a progressive but a reactionary role. Nevertheless they still embrace millions of workers. One must not think that the workers are blind and do not see the change in the historic role of the trade unions. But what is to be done? The revolutionary way out comprised itself badly in the eyes of the Left wing of the workers by the zigzags and adventures of official communism. The workers say to themselves: the trade unions are bad but without them it might be even worse. This is the psychology of an impasse. Meanwhile, the trade union bureaucracy persecutes the revolutionary workers ever more boldly, replacing ever more impudently inner democracy by the arbitrariness of cliques, transforming in essence the trade unions into some sort of concentration camps for the workers under declining capitalism.

## Can We Skip Over the Trade Unions

Under these conditions the thought easily arises; is it not possible to skip over the trade-unions? Is it not possible to replace them by some sort of fresh, incorruptible organizations on the type of revolutionary trade unions, shop committees, soviets and the like? The fundamental mistake of such attempts lies therein that a great political problem of how to free the masses from the influence of the trade-union bureaucracy is replaced by organizational experiments. It is insufficient to show the masses a new address. It is necessary to find the masses where they are and to lead them.

Impatient "lefts" sometimes say that it is in any case impossible to conquer the trade unions because the bureaucracy subjects the inner regime of the organization to its interests of self-preservation, resorting to the basest machinations, repressions and plain crookedness in the spirit of the parliamentary oligarchy of the time of the "rotten boroughs". This argument signifies in reality the giving up of the actual struggle for the masses under the excuse of the corrupt character of the trade union bureaucracy. This argument can be developed further: should we not abandon revolutionary work altogether because of repressions and provocations on the part of the government bureaucracy? There exists no principled difference here since the trade union bureaucracy has completely become a part of the

capitalist apparatus, economic and governmental. It is absurd to think that it would be possible to work against the trade union bureaucracy with its aids, or even with its consent. Insofar as it defends itself by persecutions, violence, expulsions, frequently resorting to the assistance of government authorities, we must learn to work in the trade unions discretely finding a common language with the masses but not revealing ourselves prematurely to the bureaucracy. It is precisely in the present epoch when the reformist bureaucracy of the proletariat has transformed itself into the economic police of capital, that revolutionary work in the trade unions, performed intelligently and systematically, may yield decisive results in a comparatively short time.

## The Capture of Trade Unions

We do not at all want to say by this that a revolutionary party is assured of the complete capture of the trade unions for the purposes of the socialist overturn. The problem is not so simple. The trade union apparatus has attained a great independence from the masses. The bureaucracy is capable of retaining its positions a long time after the masses have turned against it. But precisely this situation, when the masses are already hostile to the trade union bureaucracy and the bureaucracy is still capable of misrepresenting the opinion of the organization and of sabotaging the creation of shop committees, workers' councils and other organizations ad hoc, that is for the immediate needs of the given moment. Even in Russia, where the trade unions have not possessed by far the powerful traditions of the British trade unions, the October overthrow occurred with the predominance of the Mensheviks in the administration of the trade unions. Having lost the masses these administrators were still capable of sabotaging the re-election of the apparatus, although already powerless to sabotage the proletarian revolution.

It is absolutely necessary right now to prepare the mind of the advanced workers to the idea of the creation of shop committees and workers' councils at the moment of a sharp change. But it would be the greatest mistake to "play" in practice with the slogan of shop committees comforting oneself with "this idea" because of the lack of real work and real influence in the trade unions. To counterpose to the existing trade unions the abstraction of workers' councils would mean not only to set the bureaucracy against oneself but also the masses, and to deprive oneself thereby of the possibility of preparing the ground for the creation of workers' councils.

## Revolutionary Realism

A revolutionary proletarian party must be welded together by a clear understanding of its historic tasks: this presupposes a scientifically based program. At the same time a revolutionary party must know how to establish correct relations with the class: this presupposes an equality of revolutionary realism, equally removed from opportunist vagueness and sectarian aloofness. From the point of view of both these criteria intrinsically connected, the I. L. P. should review its relation to the organization and tendencies within the working class. This concerns first of all the fate of the I. L. P. itself.

— L. TROTSKY.

## The Stalinist Program for the Cuban Revolution

The Stalinist theoretical program for Cuba places on the order of the day the "agrarian, anti-imperialist revolution." According to the Stalinists the task of the Cuban Communist Party is to "agitate and organize the peasants" for this end. Among their slogans stands the demand for the division of the land which the apply to the sugar plantations.

Unquestionably the central problem of Cuban economy is the agrarian question. But the agrarian question in Cuba has an entirely different content than it had in Russia. Russian agriculture was organized on the basis of a number of large estates in the hands of feudal landowners and a myriad of small holdings worked by individual peasants. The land was cultivated with primitive methods and equipment. Those who worked the land stood in the relation to it of peasants. They constituted the majority of the population.

That is not the picture which greets the eye in Cuba. Most of the land under cultivation is devoted to sugar cane. In area this is equal to more than one third of this land. Ninety percent of this land is owned or controlled on long term leases by large American sugar companies. Some of these plantations are of enormous size. They extend beyond the county limits and include towns. Some plantations embrace tens of thousands of acres. As early as 1900 one plantation alone refined 2000,000 bags of sugar, ten percent of the entire crop. Since then centralization has gone on apace by consolidation of large plantations and the bankruptcy of the smaller ones under the prodding guidance of the Chase National and National City banks. The Chaparra plantation which began in 1900 with 68,000 acres had grown to 250,000 by 1926.

Millions of dollars in machinery have been poured into the sugar plantations. The process began in 1820 with the introduction of steam machinery. In 1840 the appearance of railroads gave this process a new boost. Today the date machinery is the most up to date machinery in the world.

In short the sugar plantations

Superficially this may seem like a realistic appraisal of the situation. In reality, the British Communist Party rejects only one form of political adventurism for another, more hysterical form. The theory and practice of social-Fascism and the rejection of the policy of the united front creates unsurmountable obstacles to the work in the trade unions, as each trade union is, by its very nature, an arena for a prolonged united front of revolutionary parties with reformist and non-party masses. Insofar as the British Communist Party proved incapable, even after the German tragedy of learning and re-arming itself anew, an alliance with it can only pull to the bottom the I. L. P. which has just recently entered into the period of revolutionary study.

Pseudo-Communists will, no doubt, refer to the last congress of trade unions which declared that there can be no united front with Communists against Fascism. It would be the greatest folly to accept this piece of wisdom as the final verdict of history. The trade union bureaucrats permit themselves such boastful formulae only because they are not immediately threatened either by Fascism, or by Communism. When the hammer of Fascism is raised over the head of the trade unions then, with a correct policy of the revolutionary party, the trade union masses will show an irresistible urge for an alliance with the revolutionary wing and will carry with them to this path even a certain portion of the apparatus. On the contrary, if Communism should become a decisive force, threatening the General Council with the loss of positions, honors and income, Messrs. Citrin and Co. would undoubtedly enter into a bloc with Mosley and Co. against the Communists. Thus, in August 1917, the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries together with the Bolsheviks repulsed general Kornilov. Two months later, in October, they were fighting hand in hand with the Kornilovists against the Bolsheviks. And in the first months of 1917, when Messrs. reformists were still strong they declaimed just like Citrin & Co. of the impossibility for a dictator to make an alliance with a dictatorship either of the Right, or of the Left.

A revolutionary proletarian party must be welded together by a clear understanding of its historic tasks: this presupposes a scientifically based program. At the same time a revolutionary party must know how to establish correct relations with the class: this presupposes an equality of revolutionary realism, equally removed from opportunist vagueness and sectarian aloofness. From the point of view of both these criteria intrinsically connected, the I. L. P. should review its relation to the organization and tendencies within the working class. This concerns first of all the fate of the I. L. P. itself.

## Pressure from Rank

Or does the author of the criticism want to say that the representatives of the organizations which signed the joint declaration do not express the opinion of the rank and file? Let us examine this argument as well. With regard to the S. A. P. it is known to all that the rank and file of the party have been striving for a long time not only for a closer approach to us but for a complete fusion with us, while until very recently, the tops evaded the issue, put breaks upon it, fearing a separation from possible allies of the right. In this case what does it mean that the tops found themselves compelled to sign jointly with us a most important document? The answer is clear: the pressure of the rank and file towards the left, that is towards us, became so strong that the leaders of the S. A. P. were forced to turn to us. Those who know how to interpret political facts and symptoms correctly, will say that this is a great victory. This conclusion retains its full force independently of the fact how adroitly, or skillfully the negotiations between the tops were carried on. Not the negotiations decide the matter but the whole preceding work of the Left Opposition.

With regard to the O. S. P. (Holland) the situation is approximately the same. This organization was not connected with us at all. Two years ago it found itself in a bloc with Seidewitz and Rosenfeld. Today it drew nearer to us. It is clear that the leaders of this organization would have never made this step if there had not been a strong pull to the left on the part of the rank and file.

With the R. S. P. (Sneevliet) the matter stands somewhat differently. Friendly relations existed here already for quite some time. Many comrades know what active support

# More on the Paris Conference

When a movement enters a new, a higher stage, there are always elements who defend the yesterday. A wider perspective frightens them. They see nothing but difficulties and dangers.

Comrades who participated in one of the meetings of Bolshevik-Leninists communicated to me somewhat the following criticism of one of the participants: "We made no gains at the Paris conference; the whole matter came down to the top; such a policy cannot have any revolutionary significance; the joint declaration signed by the 'summit' of four organizations signifies in reality a deviation towards the social-democracy..." Since this criticism, reflects—it is true, in a very exaggerated form—the doubts and apprehensions of a certain number of comrades (according to all information, of a small minority), it is necessary to examine seriously the above enumerated arguments.

"The negotiations were carried on by the tops". What does this argument mean? Conference and conventions always consist of the "tops", that is of representatives. It is an impossible task to assemble in one place all the members of the Left Opposition, the S. A. P., R. S. P. and O. S. P. How can agreements between organizations be made without negotiations of the representatives, that is "tops"? On this point the criticism evidently lacks any sense.

## Principled Declaration

The Declaration of four does not give, and under the circumstances of the matter, could not give an answer to all the problems of program and strategy. It is clear that it is impossible to build a new International on the basis of this Declaration. But neither did we intend anything of the sort. The Declaration itself states clearly that the organizations which signed the Declaration obligate themselves to elaborate, within a short time, a programmatic Manifesto which should become the fundamental document of the new International. All our sections, all the three allied organizations, as well as all sympathizing groups and elements should be drawn to this work. Do we intend to make any concessions to the social democracy in this Manifesto? The Declaration of the Bolshevik-Leninists, made public at the conference, states clearly on what basis we propose to write the Manifesto: the decisions of the first four Congresses of the Comintern, the "21 Conditions", the "11 points" of the L. O. Only the future will show whether any serious disagreements will arise on this basis between ourselves and our allies. If disagreements should arise, we will seriously fight for our point of view. Until now we have not shown any excessive pliancy in questions of principle.

The same critics also add the following argument: the new International can be built only on the wave of the ascent of the revolutionary movement; now, however, in the atmosphere of decline all attempts in this direction are doomed to failure. This profound historic argument is borrowed as a whole from the sterile scholastic Souvarine (who, alas, as far as I know, has meanwhile had time to make a turn of 180 degrees). The necessity of a break with the Second International and the preparation for the Third International was proclaimed by the Bolsheviks in the Autumn of 1914, that is, in the atmosphere of a frightful disintegration of socialist parties. At that time also there was no lack of wise men who spoke of the "utopianism" (the word "bureaucratism" was not in such abuse then) of the slogan of the Third International. Kausky went further in his famous aphorism "The International is an instrument of peace and not of war". In reality the same idea is expressed by the critics quoted above: the International is an instrument of ascent and not of decline". The proletariat has need of an International at all times and under all conditions, if there is no Comintern today, we must say so openly, and immediately start the preparation for a new International. How soon we will be able to put it on its feet, depends, of course, on the whole march of the class struggle, on the decline, or ascent of the workers' movement, etc. But even in the period of the worst decline it is necessary to prepare for a future ascent, giving our own cadres a correct orientation.

## A Step Forward or A Step to the Right?

Sneevliet and his friends have rendered the Left Opposition during the Copenhagen conference and especially, during the Amsterdam anti-war congress. The Comintern question prevented this political proximity from taking on an organizational form". When we declared ourselves for a new International the wall dividing us was broken down. Is it not clear that in this case our new orientation brought immediately a concrete and valuable result?

## Our Conjectures

About three months ago we wrote hypothetically that with a broad and decisive policy we could probably find not a few allies among Left socialist groupings. A month, a month and a half ago, we voiced the conjecture that a break with the Comintern would greatly facilitate the influx to our side of revolutionary groupings of social-democratic origin. Is it not clear that the Paris conference confirmed both these conjectures and on a scale that we ourselves could not expect two, or three months ago? Under these conditions, to complain that everything came down to negotiations by the "tops" and to assert that the new alliance has no revolutionary significance is to reveal a complete ignorance of the basic processes which are now taking place within the proletariat.

But particularly strange (mildly speaking) sounds the argument that we are making a turn towards... reconciliation with the social democracy. The Stalinists slander us in this manner and not for the first time. What basis is there for carrying these "arguments" into our own organization? Let us, however, examine them somewhat closer. The Paris conference was called not by us. We take not the slightest responsibility for its composition and agenda. We came to this conference to present there our point of view. Possibly our Declaration contained some concessions to the social-democracy? Let someone get up courage to say it! The Declaration signed by four organizations, it is understood, does not contain our program. But it defines clearly the road of the Fourth International on the basis of an irreconcilable struggle with the social-democracy, a complete break with bureaucratic centrism and a resolute condemnation of all attempts on the manner of the Two and a Half International. Where are in this concessions to the social-democracy?

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Fatalistic complaints about the objective decline must often reflect a subjective decline.

## Zimmerwald and Kienthal

Let us take the conferences of Zimmerwald and Kienthal as a comparison. They consisted, necessarily, of the "tops" (every conference consists of tops). By the number of workers directly represented they were weaker than the Paris conference. The majority in Zimmerwald and Kienthal consisted of Right-Centrist elements (Ledebour who could not resolve to vote against the war budget; Hoffmann, Bourderon, Merheim, Grimm, Axelrod, Martov, and others). Lenin found it possible to sign the Manifesto of the whole conference despite the vagueness of this document.\*\*

As far as the Zimmerwald "left" was concerned, it was extremely weak. After the rout of the Bolsheviks, the majority of the local organizations, the Bolshevik party was no stronger during the war than the present Russian Left Opposition. Other left groups were incomparably weaker than our three present allies. The general position of the workers' movement in the conditions of war seemed absolutely hopeless. Nevertheless, the Bolsheviks, as well as the group of Nashe Slovo took a course towards the Third International from the very beginning of the war. Without this course the October revolution would have been impossible.

We repeat: Lenin found it possible under the then existing conditions to sign together with Ledebour, Bourderon, Grimm and Martov a Manifesto against the war. The Bolshevik-Leninists did not sign now the resolution of the majority of the Paris conference and will, of course, take no responsibility upon themselves for this majority. Perhaps the policy of Lenin at Zimmerwald and Kienthal was... a turn towards the social-democracy? But the objection may be raised that now under the conditions of peace a stricter selection is necessary than in war time. Correct! Ledebour and Bourderon endangered themselves by signing the Manifesto of Zimmerwald, while Trammel and Co. carry on their maneuvers (the right hand to the Scandinavian social-democracy, the pinky of the Left—to the Paris conference) without running any risk. It is precisely for this reason that we refused to sign the meaningless resolution of the Paris majority. Where are here concessions to the social-democracy?

## Not Responsible for Allies

However, two of our allies—our opponents will say to us—have signed the resolution of the majority showing thereby that they have not as yet made the final choice. Absolutely correct! But neither do we take any responsibility for our allies just as they take no responsibility for us. The terms of our agreement are clearly formulated and are now accessible to all. The future will show which side our allies will finally choose. We want to help them make the right choice. One of the most important rules of revolutionary strategy reads as follows: watch your ally as well as your enemy. Mutual criticism on the basis of full equality. In this there is no trace of back-stage diplomacy of the tops; everything is done and will be done in full view of the masses, under their control, for the purpose of the education of the masses. Other ways and means of revolutionary policy do not exist at all.

## There are also other rules of revolutionary policy which it is advisable to remind of: do not get frightened in vain and do not frighten others without cause! do not invent false accusations; do not look for capitulation where there is none; do not replace Marxist discussion by unprincipled squabbles. Long experiences has shown that precisely at the time when an organization is getting ready to get out from the narrow alley to a wider arena, elements can be always found who know all grown fast to their ally, know all their neighbors, are used to carry all the ally news and rumors and are busy with the terribly important affairs of the "change of ministries" in their own ally. These are conservative and sectarian elements very much afraid that on a wider arena their art will find no application. They grab, therefore, the wagon by its wheels and try to turn it back, and they justify their, in essence, reactionary work by terribly "revolutionary" and "principled" arguments. We have tried above to weigh these arguments on the scale of Marxian dialectics. Let the comrades themselves decide what is their weight.

September 10, 1933.

—G. GOUROV.

## The Differences on the Trade-Union Question

lost their former sharpness, if not disappeared altogether.

By the way, some wise men, recall without any rhyme, or reason the "August bloc" of 1912 which had only national limits, but leave unobserved the international Zimmerwald conference, the analogy with which suggests itself.

## THE MILITANT

Entered as a second class mail matter November 28, 1928, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Under the act of March 8 1879. Published weekly by the Communist League of America (Opposition).

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Vol. VI, No. 45 (Whole No. 192)

Subscription rate: \$2.00 per copy

Foreign \$2.50 5 cents per copy