

# The New International

By Samson Freiman

IN speaking of the international conference proposed by the Communist Party of Russia (which did not invite the official Socialist Party, but its Left Wing), Alexander Trachtenberg at the time insisted that the Socialist Party itself was worthy of inclusion, since it adhered to the principles of internationalism during the war. No matter whether this statement is insincere or only erroneous, the question which it takes up ought to be set clear to all. It bears on a subject of extreme importance to the success of the Revolutionary Movement throughout the world.

If there is any one formula which is necessary as a means for a successful revolution that formula is, "the confidence of the masses." Conversely, any acts which violate the confidence which the masses have in a revolutionary organization is a direct and open violation of Socialist principles. The success of the Soviet Government of Russia lies, for one thing, in the fact that the Soviets won the confidence of the masses and held it. Perhaps one of the most impressive and suggestive statements that I have read on the Russian Revolution is a statement appearing in the *New York Times* in an article by Arthur Ransome about a year ago. His observation was that the people of the Ukraine—when the situation in the Ukraine was at its worst—having once tasted the fruits of Soviet institutions were loath to let this institution slip from their lives, although it was the Soviet organization which caused all the bitter fighting that took place in the Ukraine and tore that fertile land asunder. In spite of all the immediate misery clearly attributable to the Soviets the masses had recognized the true worth of the Soviets and were willing to pay the price, counting nothing too dear if they could only win back the self-government that was their's under Soviet organization. Experience had been the means of imbedding in their hearts the confidence that is so necessary to the success of the Socialist revolution everywhere.

Milyukov was overwhelmed the moment he opened his mouth and betrayed the masses of the Revolution. Kerensky deceived the masses with honeyed words and lasted on until his deeds bred suspicion and then distrust. All the detestable appeals for the confidence of the populace made by the Ebert government in Germany today are a betrayal of trust which the inexorable demands of proletarian history will repay with relentless severity. A revolution that goes to the very roots of society in building a new structure must meet a great many tremendous difficulties which it cannot overcome unless it has the full confidence of the proletariat. In the face of a world of enemies the Social Revolution can not afford to make any mistakes. Yet our venture is of such a highly experimental nature that it is utterly impossible to avoid a great many errors. Only if the Revolutionists succeed in winning the revolutionary confidence of the masses can they expect to bring their venture to a successful conclusion. Surrounded by enemies that have no conscience, that lie deliberately, that try to bring all kinds of confusion into the ranks of the proletariat, there is nothing to hope for unless the proletariat has full confidence in the revolution. But this confidence which must be implicit is so liable to abuse that a very sharp distinction must be made and firmly adhered to in punishing those that violate the confidence of the proletariat. Compromise breeds deceit and suspicion which destroys confidence. It behooves Socialism to stand clearly and firmly on its own ground, on the bulwarks of the proletarian dictatorship and the Communist State. The development of this confidence may, temporarily, mean "isolation"

from the masses, but that is part of the process.

Friedrich Adler's defense of his assassination of the Austrian Premier tries to justify his act in consonance with the best traditions of Socialist history. The background that he describes as leading him to choose to do his heroic deed is in a great measure the background in which our Socialist Party found itself during America's participation in the war. Assassination was a method of expression to which the individual might resort, but a Party had to find other means of expression, positive *mass means* in order to vindicate its name and traditions.

By its failure to present a clear and positive front of opposition to the government during the prosecution of the war the Socialist Party of America (I speak of the official party, not the membership whose will was baffled) has failed to do its part and does not deserve representation at the conference of the New International,—that is, not until the Left Wing conquers the party. The mere verbal adherence to principles such as are expressed in the St. Louis Plat-

form of the Party are certainly not sufficient proof of the Party's vindication of its honor. In words it went as far as Kerensky in his speeches—perhaps not so far—but its deeds have failed to convince as they have been inconspicuous and not at all in keeping with the tone of its program. The official policy of the party was bourgeois pacifism, not revolutionary Socialism. It was well enough for Max Eastman to justify this policy of words by the official Party, but I fear that his defense is meant more as an apology for his own failings. His argument is not convincing. In fact, he exemplifies the general action of the Party bureaucracy in his personal acts. In a measure, we might pardon Eastman for accepting his horn of the dilemma in starting the *Liberator*, yet we cannot close our eyes to the fact that the first issues of the magazine were a betrayal of the Socialist cause. Of course under the mask of Eastman's words it might have been found that he was camouflaging his language in order to issue his magazine during the hard months of the war. But that is just the policy that leads to ruin. Diplomacy has always been the tool of the masters. The successful avengers of oppression have been frank and uncompromising under all conditions. The true representative of the proletariat expresses himself in unequivocal language.

The St. Louis platform was never really carried out by the bureaucracy, nor was it meant in sincerity. It degenerated into petty bourgeois pacifism and nationalism. Both Berger and Hillquit finally sponsored the Majority Report. It is interesting to recall some events leading up to the adoption of the St. Louis Program.

After the break in diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany, the leaders of the Socialist Party abandoned their opposition to the calling of a national convention and hastily issued a call for a Party Convention in April instead of June or September, as had been proposed by those who had been clamoring for a convention. Naturally the election of delegates and the convention policy agitated the entire Party membership. Leon Trotzky was at that time in New York. At a general membership meeting in Local New York of the Socialist Party to discuss our attitude on the war, a very lively debate occurred between Fraina of the Left Wing and Hillquit of the moderates. The minority committee report of Fraina and Trotzky was defeated by the Hillquit report which was the nucleus of the St. Louis Resolution. Apparently, Hillquit's resolution covered the same ground as the minority resolution except that it was couched in language to protect it from legal prosecution, to make it quite unintelligible to the masses. It was a resolution without teeth.

The fight of New York was practically repeated at a similar meeting held in Essex County, New Jersey. After securing the approval of the State Committee to the Hillquit resolution with a few minor changes. George H. Goebel presented the resolution to the Essex County Local. An opposition resolution following the lines of the Fraina-Trotzky resolution in New York was also presented. A heated debate occurred and the Left Wing finally won the day, but only because the German nationalist group of the extreme right voted with the Left. When the Majority Resolution at St. Louis carried, there was no intention of carrying it out by the Party leaders that sponsored it. If the Party deserves representation at the meeting of the New International then Victor Berger also deserves the recognition that Lenin has accorded to the Left Wing groups of the Party, which have now conquered the party for revolutionary Socialism.

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