

INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALISTS

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For League Members and Sympathizers.

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Table of Contents

1. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST LEAGUE
2. TOWARDS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL: THE DECLARATION OF FOUR
3. DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE R. S. P. OF HOLLAND
4. TRADE UNION PROBLEMS IN AMERICA
5. PLENUM RESOLUTION ON THE BOYCOTT OF HITLERITE GERMANY
6. THE S. A. P., THE L. C. I. AND THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
7. SPECIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BRAZIL

The International Communist League (Bolshevik - Leninists)

The Plenum of the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists), in deciding August 1933 session to give up the effort to reform the C. I. and to orient itself toward the Fourth International, simultaneously decided to change our name from "Left Opposition" to that of "the International Communist League", an important and essential transformation.

There is no question of a new organization involved here; the I. L. O. continues its work, adapting its external forms and its content to the new tasks posed by the historically established fact that the Third International, subservient to the Stalinist bureaucracy, that is, to the theory of "socialism in a single country," has demonstrated by the defeat of the German Revolution and the triumph of Hitlerism, its total and irremediable failure.

As long as there was any hope or chance of bringing the C. I. back to the principles and line laid down by its first Congresses, the L. O. struggled inside the C. I. as a fraction, to regenerate and reform it. The fact that the C. I. has shown no sign of reaction to the Stalinist poison even after such a weighty and decisive defeat as that sustained by the working class in Germany, clearly reveals that this is no longer a living organism capable of recovering and retaining its feet, but a rotting corpse. The salvation of all that is healthy and alive in the international movement, the reorganization of the scattered revolutionary forces, and, finally, the bringing of light into the chaos caused by all the reverses of the proletariat, can be achieved only through a new International. To signalize this new orientation, this fundamental turn in the course of the "Op-

position", the latter has taken the name "International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninists)". This change of name then, corresponds to the organization's change of direction.

If, as Marx noted, the number of sects grows inversely to the rate of growth of the labor movement, it is also true that these sects are without any life or prospects. They perish quite as easily as they are born. The task of reorganizing the revolutionary forces, of bringing unity among so many opposing tendencies, of guiding and directing the international labor movement, belongs alone to an organization which bases itself on the conception worked out by Marx and verified by the October Revolution. It is this conception which gave force to the Left Opposition during the past ten years, and which guarantees the future of the International Communist League. The latter has nothing in common with all these ephemeral formations: its nature and character directly recall the nature and character of its great forerunner: that "League of Communists" which first stirred the international consciousness of the working class by arming it with the theoretical weapons for its emancipation.

This relationship between the two Leagues has not been created artificially, by us, out of a desire to calm an illustrious tradition. It is established by the fact—historically proven—that the principles and aims of the International Communist League are the same as those on which the League of Communists was founded: to unite the proletarians of all countries for the overturn of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of a new society without classes and without priv-

ate property; in one word, for the victory of the proletarian revolution in all countries.

Since the founding of the first League of Communists, the international labor movement has gone through great defeats and great victories. First of all, after a victory, came the defeat of the Paris Commune, which resulted in the disappearance of the First International and the forces of revolution. But the defeated proletariat raised itself again with greater vigor and power. After the sad years of victorious counter-revolution, the International and the labor movement experienced an ever greater expansion throughout the world. The working class grew boundlessly. Its might had become gigantic. But the class enemy had raised its own supports in the very bosom of the working class, and when the hour of struggle sounded in 1914 treachery showed itself openly: the Second International collapsed, crushed by opportunism and social-patriotism (national "socialism"). In order to find a way out of the contradictions strangling it, the bourgeoisie had recourse to war. War gave birth to the October Revolution and the fall of the most powerful monarchies of Central Europe. Once again the international proletariat rose. And the International crushed by opportunism and social-patriotism recreated itself: there was born the Third, the Communist International.

But the Communist International has failed in its task of spreading the October Revolution over the world, of extending the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Soviet power from the soil of Russia to other countries, and first of all to the other European countries. It has failed in this task because

(Continued on Page 7)

Toward a Fourth International

The Declaration of Four

In full realization of the great historic responsibility which devolved upon them, the undersigned organizations have unanimously decided to combine their forces for joint work for the regeneration of the revolutionary proletarian movement on an international scale. As the basis for their activity they lay down the following principles:

1. The mortal crisis of imperialist capitalism, which has taken the props out from under reformism (social-democracy, the Second International, the bureaucracy of the International Federation of trade-unions), poses imperatively the question of the break with reformist policy and of the revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only means for the transformation of capitalist society into a socialist society.

2. The problem of the proletarian revolution bears, by its very nature, an international character. The proletariat can build a complete socialist society only on the basis of the world division of labor and world co-operation. The undersigned categorically reject, therefore, the theory of "socialism in one country" which undermines the very foundation of proletarian internationalism.

3. No less energetically must be rejected the theory of the Austro-Marxists, centrists and Left reformists who, under the pretext of the international character of the socialist revolution, advocate an expectant passivity with regard to their own country, delivering thereby the proletariat in reality into the hands of Fascism. A proletarian party which evades the seizure of power under the present historic conditions, commits the worst of betrayals. The victorious proletariat of one country must strengthen its national dictatorship by socialist construction, which remains of necessity incomplete and contradictory until the working class seizes political power in at least a few advanced capitalist countries. Simultaneously, the victorious working class of one country must direct all its efforts to the extension of the socialist revolution to other countries. The contradiction between the national character of the seizure of power and the international character of socialist society can be resolved only by courageous revolutionary action.

4. The Third International which grew out of the October revolution laying down the principles of proletarian policy in the epoch of imperialism and giving the world proletariat the first lessons in the revolutionary struggle for power, fell victim of a chain of historical contradictions. The treacherous role of the social-democracy, the immaturity and inexperience of the Communist parties led to the breakdown of the post war revolutionary movements in the East and in the West. The isolated position of the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country gave an extraordinary power to the ever more conservative and nationally-limited Soviet bureaucracy. The slavish dependence of the sections of the Comintern on the So-

viet tops led, in its turn, to a new series of grave defeats, to bureaucratic degeneration to the theory and practice of the Communist parties, to their organizational weakening and more than that, the Comintern proved not only incapable of fulfilling its historic role but became more and more of an obstacle in the way of the revolutionary movement.

5. The advance of Fascism in Germany put the organizations of the working class to a decisive test. The social-democracy once more confirmed the designation given it by Rosa Luxemburg and revealed itself for the second time as "the stinking corpse". The overcoming of the organizations, ideas and methods of reformism is the necessary prerequisite for the victory of the working class over capitalism.

6. The German events revealed with no less force the collapse of the Third International. Despite its fourteen years existence, despite the experience gained in gigantic battles, despite the moral support of the Soviet state and the plentiful means for propaganda, the Communist party of Germany revealed under conditions of a grave economic, social and political crisis, conditions exceptionally favorable for a revolutionary incapacity and thereby showed conclusively that despite the heroism of many of its members it had become totally incapable of fulfilling its historic role.

7. The position of world capitalism; the frightful crisis which plunged the working masses into unheard of misery; the revolutionary movement of the oppressed colonial masses; the world danger of Fascism; the perspective of a new cycle of wars which threaten to destroy the whole human culture—these are the conditions which imperatively demand the welding together of the proletarian vanguard into a new (Fourth) International. The undersigned obligate themselves to direct all their forces to the formation in the shortest possible time of this International on the firm foundation of the theoretic and strategic principles laid down by Marx and Lenin.

8. While ready to co-operate with all the organizations, groups and factions which are actually developing from reformism or bureaucratic centrism (Stalinism) towards revolutionary Marxian policy the undersigned at the same time declare that the new International cannot tolerate any conciliation towards reformism or centrism. The necessary unity of the working class movement cannot be attained by the blurring of reformist and revolutionary conception, or the adaptation to the Stalinist policy, but only by combatting the policies of both bankrupt Internationals. To remain equal to its task the New International must not permit any deviation from revolutionary principles in the question of the insurrection, the proletarian dictatorship, the Soviet form of the state, etc.

9. By its class basis, by its social foundations, by the incontestably prevailing forms of property, the U. S. S. R. remains also today a workers' state, that is an instrument

for the building of a socialist society. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of its most important tasks the defense of the Soviet state from imperialism and internal counter-revolution. Precisely the revolutionary defense of the U. S. S. R. places upon us the imperative task of freeing the revolutionary forces of the entire world from the corrupting influence of the Stalinist Comintern and of building a new International. Only under the condition of complete independence of the international proletarian organizations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false methods before the working masses is a successful defense of the Soviet Union possible.

10. Party democracy is a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of revolutionary proletarian parties on a national as well as on an international scale. Without the freedom of criticism, without the elections of functionaries from top to bottom, without the control of the apparatus by the rank and file, no truly revolutionary party is possible.

The need for secrecy under conditions of illegality changes completely the forms of the internal life of a revolutionary party and makes wide discussions and elections difficult, if not altogether impossible. But even under the most difficult conditions and circumstances the basic demands of a healthy party regime retain their full force: honest information of the party, freedom of criticism and a real inner unity between leadership and the party majority. Having suppressed and crushed the will of the revolutionary workers, the reformist bureaucracy turned the social-democracy and the trade-unions into impotent bodies despite their membership numbering millions. Having stifled under democracy, the Stalinist bureaucracy stifled also the Comintern. The new International, as well as the parties adhering thereto, must build their entire internal life on the basis of democratic centralism.

11. The undersigned created a permanent commission of delegates representatives and assigned the following to it.

- The elaboration of a programmatic manifesto as the charter of the new International;
- the preparation of a critical analysis of the organizations and tendencies of the present-day workers movement (theoretic commentary to the Manifesto);
- the elaboration of theses on all the fundamental questions of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat;
- the representation of the undersigned organizations before the outside world.

SIGNED:

- E. Bauer—International I. O. P. (Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninists))
 J. Schwab—S. A. P. (Socialist Workers Party of Germany)
 J. P. Schmidt—O. S. P. (Independent Socialist Party of Holland)
 K. Smeerliet—R. S. P. (Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland)

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES, R.S.P. OF HOLLAND

On its Adhesion to the International Communist League

1. The Revolutionary Socialist Party sets itself the goal of realizing by collectivization, the organization of the socialist society which will no longer recognize the exploitation of man by man, classes, a state, or a society based on the ownership of the land and the means of production.

2. The realization of socialism can be the result only of the expropriation of the owning class, after the proletariat has conquered political power. The daily struggle of the working class is an integral part of the conquest of political power, which cannot be achieved except in a revolutionary situation.

A revolutionary situation exists when as a result of its growing inherent contradictions, capitalist society reaches a stage of development in which the productive forces are cramped by the relations of production, and when the proletarian class has matured to the point of political mass strikes going as far as armed insurrection to destroy the domination of the possessing class. The State is thus the chief instrument of power of the dominant class in the service of exploitation and oppression. The capitalist state carries out this role under diverse forms, monarchical and Fascist-dictatorial as well as the democratic republic.

The relation of forces in the class struggle depends on the form which the possessing class uses to defend its class interests. The victorious proletariat can never utilize the form of capitalist state for the realization of its goal; it must destroy the capitalist state and utilize workers councils which must accomplish the overthrow of the capitalist system in order to introduce production and distribution on a socialist scale.

In the period of transition to a socialist society, the domination of workers councils will be the expression of the proletarian dictatorship, to defend the victory against all internal and external counter-revolutionary attacks.

3. The development of the capitalist system has led to the construction of a powerful productive mechanism which, in expanding, presses against the maintainance of private capitalist property.

The present world crisis, which is different from all preceding crises by virtue of its extent and its sharp and lasting character, is both a cyclical and a structural crisis. It clearly shows that the high point of capitalist development has been passed and that the system is in its period of decay.

The internal contradictions of capitalism breed crises which reappear with an ever more accelerated and violent rhythm. On the one hand, the birth of new industrial centers, the colonial and semi-colonial revolutionary movements which arise in them, as well as the rapid industrialization of the U. S. R. and on the other hand, the development of capitalist technique and organization (trusts, cartels, monopolies, rationalization of industry and farming), prevent the application for the solution of the crisis of normal means: expansion of the world market and normalization by the distribution of

The rapid proletarianization of large layers of the middle class, including the peasantry, goes along with unprecedented world-wide unemployment and the pauperization and ruin of the proletariat.

In these conditions the capitalist class shakes off parliamentary democratic forms. International tension between states is sharpened and the menace of war increases.

4. The political situation in this period of capitalist decay is marked by two great dangers. No solution is possible on a capitalist basis of the inter-imperialist conflicts, the conflict between imperialism and the U. S. S. R. born of the October Revolution, the conflicts between imperialism and the growing movements for colonial liberation born of the colonial and semi-colonial economic revolutions.

Just as the organic development of capitalism cannot resolve the contradictions of the system and prevent crises and their fatal consequences, so the international efforts of capitalist powers in the League of Nations and the disarmament conferences remain sterile, unable to liquidate the war danger.

These international efforts amount only to a regrouping of powers involved and bring in their train the causes of new conflicts.

Above all, they inspire dangerous illusions which paralyze the struggle of the proletariat against war as well as against exploitation and oppression.

In the relations between classes and states two alternatives are revealed ever more clearly: a march forward to Socialism, or a decline into barbarism.

5. The phenomena of the period of capitalist decay reveal the illusory nature of the idea of a peaceful taking of power by parliamentary and democratic methods. This idea deprives the working class of its chance to defend itself, as much in the day-to-day economic and political struggle as in the inevitable contest for power.

The International Social Democracy, personified in the Second International, the sections affiliated to it and those economic organizations of the working class which belong to them, become the fortresses of the possessing class for the defense of its power, because of their use of a tactic which derives from this mistaken fundamental conception.

The Social Democracy has made of itself a prisoner of the owning class; in the present stage of capitalist development the tactic of passivity and class harmony and the acceptance of governmental responsibilities lead the proletariat to sacrifice class resistance on the altar of bourgeois democracy (literally, the altar of make-believe democracy) and sows passivity and indifference in the class.

Those economic and political organizations which apply these tactics become, by this very fact integral part of the apparatus of domination of the owning class which, with

for its own interests. This it does even when it does not elect to use dictatorial powers to destroy proletarian organizations in order to achieve its aims without friction.

6. The Third International, born of the Russian Revolution, and its affiliated sections are fundamentally devoid of those principles and methods which served as a basis at the time of their creation and at the time when they took upon themselves the role of general staff (literally) of the world proletarian revolution. The position of dominance of the C. P. U. S. S. R. in the Third International has, on the one hand, led to the fixing and to the subordination of its policy and tactics to the policy and tactics of the Soviet State and on the other hand, to the mechanical transplanting of its experiences and conceptions into the life and struggles of the other Communist Parties.

The internationalism of the struggle of the proletarian class has been laid on the shelf with the acceptance in principle of the Stalinist conception of the construction of socialism in a single country, a conception which has given birth to dangerous illusions and serious obstacles to the initiative and activity of the affiliated parties, and led them into a disastrous passivity in periods favorable to revolution. The disadvantages of this development are even more aggravated by the complete elimination of party democracy, both in the life of the Third International and in the affiliated parties, and by the adoption of conceptions and organizational methods which prevent the restoration of the Comintern to health.

7. The experiences of the October Revolution, which constitutes the greatest victory the proletariat has ever gained in the centuries of class struggle, have taught the international proletariat that the capture of power by the working class is impossible except by means of an effective extra-parliamentary struggle in which the revolutionary party acts as the guide of the working class and utilizes the Workers Councils as executors of the proletarian will. These Councils have the function of completing the expropriation of the capitalist class and laying the groundwork of the socialist organization of society.

The retarding of the proletarian revolution in the countries of highly developed capitalism, the backward state of pre-revolutionary Russia and the destruction wrecked by the world war and the civil war, give birth to serious threats to the achievements of the October Revolution, which are not definitively surmounted by the introduction of planned production and collectivized agriculture. On the contrary, the existing dangers increase with the increase of the power of the Soviets and the proletarian organizations, and with the growth of the bureaucracy in the Soviet power, in the life of the C. P. U. S. S. R., which even accomplishes the systematic destruction of the active and consistent revolutionary forces that rise against the degeneration (transformation, according to the texts) of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Trade Union Problems in America

Boycott of Germany

Letter of the International Secretariat to the American Section:

Dear Comrades:

The question of work in the trade unions continues to be of unusual importance in all countries. In the U. S. it arises on a wide scale for the first time at a moment when the entire national economic and political life is upset and when government policy is giving an impulse to the trade union movement. It is not at all likely that government liberality with respect to the unions—not to speak of the present policy of planning in general—will continue for long. In any case one may certainly say that the liberalism of the Administration with respect to the trade unions will not at once transform itself into liberalism on the part of the union bureaucracy with respect to Communists. Quite the contrary, not only the reactionary band of Green and Co., but also the bureaucracy of the "progressive" trade unions will redouble their onslaughts against the revolutionary wing in order to show the White House that they fully merit its confidence and backing. There exists the great danger that in the present period of deep mass ferment and trade-union development, the Communists will again let themselves be isolated from the workers' organizations. The trade union bureaucrats can achieve this aim the more easily, because the Stalinist bureaucracy has gravely compromised Communism in the workers' eyes by its policy of ultimatism, commands and impotence, this compromising will inevitably affect us too.

Wherever they are expelling Communists from trade unions, or may begin to do it tomorrow, it is not only permissible but even obligatory not to unfold the banner of Communism prematurely but to conduct "anonymous" revolutionary work. It may be objected that such a method of work contains certain dangers within itself: by hiding its banner, the organization can, without noticing it, become unused to its own banner. Adaptation to an enemy and to the prejudices of the mass conceal in themselves the danger of degeneration into opportunism. All this is quite true. The party as a whole must act with its banner unfurled and name things by their right names. But in the given case we do not speak of the Party (League), but of its picked detachments working inside hostile trade unions. This is not at all the same thing. Communists working in trade unions, of course, cannot in any case disavow their party, that is to say, make statements opposed to its program and its decisions. But the Communist in the trade union is certainly not compelled to say everything that the party as a whole says. The Communist working in a trade union is not forced to call himself a Communist at the top of his voice. The Party (League) can and should say fully in its press, in its mass meetings, in strike meetings and general meetings of trade-unionists, that which Communists inside the unions may not be able to say at any given moment. It is necessary to make a wise division of labor.

organization supplement one another.

Of course, this does not mean that Communists working inside trade unions can decide at their own pleasure the policy for work in the unions; the whole political organization must decide what forms of adaptation to the trade union situation are permissible and suitable. The more difficult revolutionary work in the trade unions becomes, the more strictly systematic should be party control on its members in the trade unions. But this control can, and in the majority of cases should, be under present conditions strictly secret.

It is true that even when there is such control, "anonymous" work in the trade unions can lead to a contraction of the horizon and a lowering of the revolutionary level. There is only one means of guarding against this: Communists must not be simply trade unionists, but must at the same time do party work outside the unions, even if secretly in order not to compromise themselves with the trade unions.

In many cases the Stalinists declared that they would agree to work in the trade unions, but on condition that they be granted in advance the right to have Communist fractions. Such "conditions" are grotesque: to demand from the trade union bureaucracy which is hunting for Communists, that the latter be benevolently installed to work with the necessary comfort, threatening the bureaucrats that, if they refuse, the Communists will "strike", that is, refuse to do revolutionary work—to demand that is manifest nonsense. We must know how to work in the unions without comfort, and without the authorization of the bureaucracy.

It is clear that Communists must be united in a fraction, but that fraction, while working on the basis of strict internal discipline, must in no case appear openly as a fraction should the conditions be unfavorable to that (and in the majority of cases this is just the situation).

The Party (League) clearly must have a platform for trade union work over any given period. It is necessary to know how to translate this platform into the language of the trade unionists, in order to lead the masses forward more surely. The danger of what we call "tailism" (a real and serious danger) will be all the better avoided if the party as a whole will decisively supplement the work of its trade unionist fractions.

It is absolutely clear, on the other hand, that such careful work in the unions should continue until the Communists have succeeded in proving to the workers that they are not Stalinist bureaucrats, obtuse ultimatumists, but serious and able fighters who can be relied on and who consequently are worthy of trust. The more the influence of the Communist fraction grows in the union, the more boldly and openly will it fling out the banner of its party.

We sincerely hope that these basic considerations will be entirely approved by you.

—PLENUM OF THE O. G. I.

(Resolution of the International Plenum of the Bolshevik-Leninists.)

The boycott is an important weapon in the international struggle against Hitler Germany. It is an elementary truth that the boycott cannot overthrow Hitler. But it can force him to make certain concessions and can help the defeated German working class as well as the world working class, in regaining confidence in the power of proletarian internationalism.

The boycott of goods supported by bourgeois and liberal Jewish organizations, transforms this method of struggle against Hitler into a means of bourgeois competition and ideological preparation for war, and into the creation of a "collaboration" between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, in view of coming war.

The boycott of German goods is also propagated in the same sense by the reformist lackeys of capitalism. The revolutionary proletariat can take part only in an active boycott, which also develops the class struggle against its own bourgeoisie; boycott of shipping, strikes of seamen, longshoremen and railroad workers.

The Third International, refusing any boycott in the interest of the commercial policy of the Soviet Union, shows again its inability to defend the class interests of the proletariat; an inability which is due to the non-Marxist policy of socialism in one country. Experience has proved that the boycott has no meaning unless it is conducted by the mass organizations of the proletariat, and is designed to attain an aim in a definite period of time. This is why the boycott should be preceded by systematic propaganda and by the creation of a united front which will permit the projection of the boycott with a determined aim and at the same time with all the necessary force.

It is in this sense that the Plenum of the International Opposition has addressed itself to all workers' organizations on August 23, and again in its appeal on the subject of the trial on the burning of the Reichstag, for joint action of all workers' organizations.

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT.
September 28, 1933.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SWISS

Our Swiss section held its national conference on September 2-3. This conference has an enormous importance for the future development of the Bolshevik-Leninists in Switzerland.—After approving the new orientation, the conference adopted the name, "Marxist Action". A new organ under the same name has been issued. The first number dealing with the very important questions of the Zurich elections, has reverberated in the whole Swiss press.—It is very significant and enheartening to note that the members of the S. A. P., living in Switzerland belong to this new organization.

Great opportunities are opening for our Swiss comrades. It is a known fact that a development to the Left has taken place in the Schaffhausen organization, still affiliated

The S. A. P., the L. C. I. and the Fourth International

Dear Comrades,

Your letter of December 27th, you raise some questions, both specific and general. I shall try to answer them as fully as possible.

The history of the inception and development of the S.A.P. is known to you. After splitting from the party, the opposition wing of the social democracy gained the possibility of progressive development. Splitting away from their organization, a minority of the Brandlerites gained the possibility of moving forward. These two groups were drawn together both by their progressive sides (their break with the old bureaucracy) and by their negative sides (their theoretical amorphousness, lack of clear strategic conception and so forth.) However, the evolution of the S.A.P. was mechanically cut short by the Nazi overturn. But from it, certain leaders of the S.A.P. have drawn absolutely erroneous notions as regards the political significance of their own experience and as regards the conditions for the formation of a revolutionary party, in general.

The Fight Against "Sectarianism"

The fight of the S.A.P. against the Communist League no longer bears a progressive character; it is conservative: it is a fight to preserve its own amorphousness and its privilege not to think out political ideas to their conclusion. As always happens in such cases, this struggle is refracted in the closeness of the comrades of the S.A.P. and appears to them as a struggle against our "sectarianism." A revolutionary organization whose cadres have not absorbed into their blood and bones the strategic lessons of the last decade cannot possess, under present conditions, the necessary force of resistance to the decomposing tendencies; and, in any case, it will prove incapable of leading real masses.

In defining sectarianism, the leaders of the S.A.P. resort not to the Marxist criterion but to the trade-unionist, that is, to the measure of bare numbers, "the mass." They have failed to grasp the laws that govern the transition of a principled quality into a mass quantity; they have not pondered over the objective and subjective pre-conditions that are necessary for such a transition.

Why are the Internationalists Isolated?

This is how comrades of the S.A.P. often put the question: Why is it, that with correct principles, with a Marxist analysis of events and so forth, the Left Opposition remains so isolated? The answer is clear: because it lacks the skill of keeping quiet about its own principles and of adapting itself to different ones. Such an argument exposes completely the anti-historic, anti-dialectic, and vulgar thinking of the critics themselves. Our great teachers, Marx and Engels remained in a state of frightful political isolation from 1850 to 1864. The Russian revolutionists, with Lenin at their head, were cruelly isolated from 1907 to 1912, and as late as July 1914 their isolation assumed a character almost hermetic. Critics, who are little given to meditation, have overlooked the following facts of

A Letter from L. Trotsky to a Group of S.A.P. Comrades

1. The Russian Left Opposition, which expressed the most consistent dynamic tendencies of the Russian proletariat, must have become weakened in proportion as the bureaucracy grew out of the revolution, and pushed the proletariat into the background.

2. The Left Opposition, which expressed the connection between the October revolution and the international revolution, must have become weakened in proportion as the weakness of the international revolution manifested itself.

The Defeats of the Proletariat

3. The Left Opposition was dealt the first cruel blow immediately after the capitulation of the German Communist party in 1923; the defeat of the Polish proletariat, and of the English General Strike in 1926 by weakening the world proletarian vanguard, weakened the Left Opposition, the vanguard of the vanguard; the collapse of the Chinese revolution in 1927 swung the scales decisively in favor of the theory and practice of "socialism in one country"; and finally, without dwelling on a whole series of intermediate events of the same type, the German catastrophe of 1933 dealt the cruellest blow to the world proletariat. With these unheard of historical defeats, as a background, the Opposition was able to educate by its theoretical analysis numerically small cadres, but could not lead the masses.

4. The decline and the demoralization of the Comintern could not but compromise, in the eyes of the masses, all revolutionary groupings, especially those which were connected with the Comintern by their origin.

5. Finally, one must add the eleven years' campaign of slander organized by the Stalinist bureaucracy over the whole world. In the entire political history of mankind there is hardly to be found a persecution so rich in financial resources and in apparatus, so systematic and persistent, so poisoned in content,—and which at the same time was covered by the authority of the first workers' state.

Who Else Leads Masses?

The leaders of the S.A.P. shut their eyes to all these "trifles." And besides, they forget to point out where is to be found another revolutionary grouping alongside of ours which disclosed its ability to lead the masses during this period. If some organization or other, the S.A.P. in particular, did achieve partial, purely empirical, in the nature of things, episodic and, besides, extremely unstable "successes," it is obliged for this to a great degree to the critical and political work of the Left Opposition.

Finally,—and at the present time this is of utmost practical importance—there are facts by the hundred and by the thousand that demonstrate to those who are able to decipher political symptoms that the Left Opposition has already broken through the blocading ring. The Left Opposition is pen-

and-preparing the triumph of revolutionary Marxism on a new historical stage. Among the number of such symptoms is the behavior of the S.A.P. itself. While with its right hand, the S.A.P. together with Trautman signed the equivocal diplomatic and also harmful resolution; with its left hand, it found itself compelled to sign together with us the Declaration in favor of the 4th International—the only progressive revolutionary document of the last period. Obviously this document could not result in immediate miracles: but it will find its way despite the vacillations of even those who are among the number of signatories.

"Don't Speak of Things as They Are"

To have a basis for their right to ideological amorphousness, the leaders of the S.A.P. have invented a special theory which may be summed up in the phrase, "don't speak about things as they are." Contrary to everything we have been taught by Marx, Engels and Lenin and flying in the face of what our own experience teaches us, this principle is based upon an unconscious or semi-conscious confusion of a pedagogic and an agitational approach to a particular group in a particular instance with the principled position of a party in its relations to the proletariat, other parties, and historic events.

At a gathering of workers who are monarchists or Catholics I would deal cautiously with the altar and the throne. But in the program of my party and in all its policies, its relation to religion and monarchy must be formulated with absolute exactness. At a meeting of a reformist trade union, I, as member of the union, might be compelled to leave much unsaid; but the party as a whole, in its papers, in its public meetings, pamphlets and proclamations is duty-bound to say everything.

A Party Must Tell the Whole Truth

Should police conditions compel the legal press to be cautious in its formulations, the party must have an illegal press besides. When Marxists demand that "things be spoken of as they are," they have in mind not every isolated speech in some special situation or other but the policy of the party as a whole. The party which for "tactical" reasons hides its position is no revolutionary party because it repels the advanced workers, because it adapts itself to the prejudices of the backward workers. Concurrently, the backward workers can be re-educated only through the advanced.

But even at a particular meeting, while using all the tact necessary in approaching a given group, one must not forget that among them there are workers on different levels, and that while it may be necessary to adapt oneself to the backward ones in the method of exposition, it is impermissible to adopt one's political position to them. Thus, for instance, there cannot, at present, be a single political mass meeting at which revolutionary Marxism is not obliged to bring forward the idea of the 4th International in one form or another. Even though it is

ally, it is nevertheless immeasurably more important and fruitful than repeating general phrases, or presenting criticism which may be correct but which fails to draw the clear and necessary conclusions. In any case, no "tactical" considerations can condone fraternization and embraces with political fakery and traitors in the eyes of the workers.

"Eleven Points" of Principle

The most important strategical lessons of the last decade have been formulated by us in the eleven points that you are acquainted with. These brief theses are based upon the collective work of the International Left Opposition. Before discussing "sectarianism" one should determine one's own attitude to the basic problems formulated in these 11 points. This has always been our demand to the comrades of the S.A.P. and we continue to demand precisely this today. Without a specific criticism of our principled position and the methods flowing from it, the charge of "sectarianism" can remain only so much empty sound.

Had the leaders of the S.A.P. studied the documents, pondered and discussed the tragic experience of the Anglo-Russian Committee, which was of some historical significance, they would not be making now the experiment of their own "German-Norwegian Committee," a pale copy of the pathetic original. It would not take much effort to demonstrate that all the arguments brought in defense of the unprincipled and hopeless bloc with Traumacl are only repetitions, almost word for word, of the arguments used by Stalin, Bukharin and Lovozky in defense of their bloc with Paresil and Citrine. Disregard for theory, which is only the generalization of the practice of the past, takes its cruel revenge in this given instance also.

"100% Marxism"

Occasionally one may hear the following reproach from our allies: The Left Opposition analyzes the situation quite realistically and it advances the correct slogans; but why does it take such an intransigent attitude to those organizations that stand outside of the 2nd and 3rd Internationals? Why does it demand from them "100%" Marxism? Behind this extremely characteristic approach there is hidden an entire world attitude in which there is hardly to be found 51% Marxism.

A revolutionary organization must, of course, study most attentively the objective situation in order not to mistake its own desires for the mood of the masses. But the party will be able to utilize the objective conditions and gain the leadership of the masses only provided the following conditions exist: its own ideological cohesion, its fighting unanimity, and invincible discipline. The chief historical instrument of our epoch is the party of the proletariat. This instrument must be forged of the best steel, well tempered, and sharply ground. Only if such an instrument exists is it possible to work successfully upon the raw historic material.

Realism and Irreconcilability

A realistic study of objective conditions, on the one hand, and an irreconcilable strictness in one's relation to one's own party, on the other hand—these are two organically

indissoluble sides of Marxism. Without a scientific orientation, without an accounting of the condition of the masses, without paying attention to external impediments one can have only the policies of sectarianism and adventurism. Without a day to day struggle for principled purity and for the intransigence of the party one can have only the petty-bourgeois floundering in the waves of history.

You are no doubt aware that together with my closest German friends I stood for a merger as soon as possible with the S.A.P., hoping that the education of a unified organization would be hastened by our joint experience coupled with mutual criticism. But after initial vacillations, the leaders of the S.A.P. have rejected the merger. The immediate reason was provided by the question relating to the Norwegian Labor party (or what is practically one and the same thing, the London Bureau). They refused to merge with us in order to have the possibility of continuing their hapless romance with Traumacl.

The Fear of Ideas

A special theory has been advanced in order to adorn this uncouth reality: the theory of the excessive influence of a single "personality," the danger of a "personal" regime, and so forth. From the viewpoint of Marxism, individuals are dangerous or useful depending upon what ideas and methods they represent. Fortunately, or unfortunately, none of us has at his disposal any other means other than the means of exerting ideological influence; that is, we have neither state power, nor control of the treasury connected with it, nor any hired agencies. Under these conditions the pretended dread of "personality" is in reality fear of certain definite ideas. Semi-hostility in one's relation to the principles of the Left Opposition goes hand in hand with the urge to preserve one's right to amorphousness which seemingly is capable of engendering a great attractive power for the "masses."

In order to justify their gravitation toward Traumacl, Maurin and the like—certainly, oh, most certainly! for the sake of the "masses"—a legend has been put into circulation that we have made it our goal to "compromise" the leaders of the S.A.P. and to tear away their followers from them. It is self-evident that every ideological and political struggle bears within it the danger of lowering the authority of those leaders who stubbornly continue in their mistakes and who screen with arguments ad hominem (person to person) their inclination to sit on a fence.

Why We Stood for Merger

Precisely because of this did I urge a merger so that the necessary discussion could take its place in an orderly and friendly manner within the framework of a single organization. The idea of using any sort of artificial measures to "compromise" and "eliminate" the leaders of the S.A.P. is so absurd as to make it hardly worth while to dwell on. We are only too well aware how poorly we are equipped at present with qualified revolutionary workers, and because of this we are least of all inclined to reduce their number artificially. And besides what

motives could there be for this? As a matter of fact, those comrades who do not wish to part company with their attitude of going fifty-fifty feel that the criticism of fence sitting is malicious personal criticism. Such has always been the case.

For better or for worse, it was necessary to realize the merger at the given stage. Our German section must, of course, resume its complete organization freedom. Does this imply a break with the S.A.P. in the sphere of preparing the 4th International? No, that would be wrong. The formation of the 4th International is a very complex process, and in this process I trust that the activities of the International Communist League will play a very prominent role, but still, not the only one.

The Reservoir of Youth

You express the desire that the League should become the axis around which would crystallize all those revolutionary elements that have broken with the 2nd and 3rd Internationals. This formulation is correct but as you yourselves realize it is not quite complete. The youth also must be included who belong to neither International and who compose the great reservoir of the future. But even the adherence of groups that split away from the old Internationals must not be thought of as following a straight line altogether. For instance, the members of the S.A.P. split away from the two old Internationals, then drew close to us but wavered, halting at a certain distance away from us.

Does this imply that we must not attempt at joint work with them? That would be real sectarianism, in the spirit of the Bordigists who think that they will continue sucking their own fingers until history comes to its senses and begs them to take the lead. Propagating the ideas of the Left Opposition, recruiting more and more new adherents, individually and in groups, into the ranks of the Communist League, carrying on an agitation in the masses under the slogan of the 4th International, educating our own cadres, deepening our theoretical position—such is our basic work in the historic period immediately ahead of us. But this work does not exclude mergers, agreements, and blocs with organizations drawing close to us and who desire to work for the creation of the New International.

Events Will Work for Us

True, for the last period, the leaders of the S.A.P. have been evincing an ever greater friendliness to the right in relations with centrists and even reformists, and an increasing hostility in relation to us. Should this evolution proceed further in the same direction it would, of course, signify the break of the S.A.P. with us, and, coupled with this, the inevitable collapse of the S.A.P. itself, because, as was said above only principled and tempered organizations standing under international control can possess the force of resistance to the decomposing tendencies of our epoch. I do not think, however, that matters as regards the S.A.P. are hopeless. If our arguments failed to help or did not help sufficiently, then the saving action will come from the actions of the "friends" from the right. One never

have no doubts that Tranmael and Co. will provide in the immediate future a few objective lessons to those utopians who deem it possible to transform enemies into friends out of skillful manipulations.

Same Banner of the Fourth International

It would be an unlawful pretence, to say nothing of adventurism, to proclaim that the New International has already been established today. Of course, you do not demand this. We are erecting only the foundation and preparing the timber. But over this timber, we, at this very moment, unfurl the banner of the 4th International so that all should know what sort of a structure is being erected. Should some participant or other in the construction arrive tomorrow at the conclusion that the work is beyond his powers or not to his liking, we would be sorry and we would go on with putting up the walls. In the interests of joint work we are ready to make reasonable concessions in all practical questions; but we do not place the fate of the 4th International in dependence upon the good will of this or that ally.

At this moment we are working out documents dealing with the fundamental questions of proletarian strategy, first and foremost—the relation to war. We will strain every effort in order to achieve unanimity on this question with our allies. Should we fail, we shall issue the documents in our name. Life waits on no one. To give Marxist answers to events in time means to build the New International.

Principled Self-Determination

What position should you take under the conditions in which you find yourselves? I think that one must begin with the principled self-determination. As matters stand today (through no fault of ours), you must choose between the League and the S.A.P. From your letter it is apparent that your group has not determined its position on the question of the Norwegian Labor party, the London Bureau and so forth. Concurrently, these and analogous questions will serve as touchstones for the determination of a correct Marxist line in the course of the next few months. You are duty bound to determine your own position. Of course, not within the next 24 hours: the documents must be studied, the necessary data collected, the question of today must be compared with the experience of the Anglo-Russian Committee and so forth. Should all this not prove sufficient, it will then be necessary to postpone the final decision until new events have brought the test. Personally I have not the slightest doubt that the events have brought the test. Personally I have not the slightest doubt that the events in this question as in all major questions will work for the Communist-Internationalists. Needless to say, I should like to infect you too with this assurance in order to attract you completely over to our ranks.

With International Communist greetings,

—L. TROTSKY.

Declaration of Principles of R.S.P. of Holland

(Continued from Page 3)

In connection with the phenomena noted and the great errors which have been made, the inauspicious policy of illusions and the mutilation of the proletarian dictatorship by those at the head of the U. S. S. R., do not at all diminish the world importance of the October Revolution, still less the duty of defending the U. S. S. R. against no matter what imperialist effort to destroy it.

In this respect that is to say in case of an attack against the U.S.S.R. the aid it should be given consists in transforming this war into a civil war against its own bourgeoisie.

8. Basing itself on the experiences of the Russian proletariat during and after the October Revolution drawing therefrom lessons for struggle under conditions existing here the R. S. P. recalls that the liberation of the working class can only be its own work.

The preparation and organization of the struggle for liberation necessitates creation of a revolutionary party which leads the class struggle on an international basis.

The R. S. P. is entirely conscious that the center of gravity of working class activity is more than ever in real mass struggles, and also that it is more and more necessary to apply a tactic of revolutionary struggle to economic conflicts.

Trade union and parliamentary struggles in the period of decaying capitalism cannot bring the workers any appreciable gains. Nevertheless, the R. S. P. supports the trade union movement, preferring those groupings which see the trade union movement from a class struggle viewpoint, which do the most in their propaganda to clarify class consciousness, and which take up a position against disastrous illusions.

The R. S. P. also uses auxiliary parliamentary means, although it knows that no important ameliorations can be won for the workers. It radically opposes, however, all blocs with bourgeois groupings and participation in the government.

The R. S. P., starting from the viewpoint that it must take account of the daily demands of the working class in its actions, uses parliament in a revolutionary manner to unmask the political illusions of democratic parliamentarism and to hasten the mobilization of workers on the class front.

It desires to free from illusions not only workers sympathetic to Stalinism, but also the Social-Democratic workers, in order to win them for struggle against the owning class and the capitalist state. It desires to struggle against Fascism and the dangers of war by every means.

In the movement for revolutionary colonial liberation, it sees the ruin of the power of world imperialism. It declares its solidarity with this movement and supports by all means in its power the forces of Indonesian revolution which represent the interests of the working class and which struggle ir-

ism and for the immediate independence of Indonesia.

The R. S. P. desires to be the advance guard of the Dutch proletariat. It does not wish to let itself be influenced by the prejudices of backward elements but desires to conduct itself so that it never loses contact with the proletarian mass and so that the militant forces are not sacrificed in sterile putsches.

In order to meet this task, the R. S. P. desires to give itself an organizational form in which the intellectual life of the party can develop while maintaining discipline in action, and which can assure the intimate contact of its members, local organizations and leading organs. Democracy in the inner life of the party must be the rule. Guarding itself in this manner against bureaucratic degeneration, the R. S. P. desires to carry on its revolutionary role in the struggle of the Dutch proletariat for freedom.

The International Communist League

(Continued from Page 1)

of the degeneration of its leadership, concentrated in the hands of the Soviet state bureaucracy. In effect, there has been lacking both in Europe and the Far East, not a favorable opportunity for a victory of the proletariat, but a leadership capable of guaranteeing this victory. The decay of the C. I. has taken permanent form in the theory and practice of "socialism in a single country." We witness once more the abandonment of the international line, the withdrawal within national frontiers and a national framework. That is to say: there has been a betrayal of the internationalist conception established by Marxism as the necessary instrument to assure the victory of the proletariat and the establishment of a classless society, a genuinely socialist society. Once more the International has perished, vanquished this time by "national reformism."

The task of the International Communist League is again to reestablish the international leadership of the proletariat, to forge a new party of the proletariat, the party of world revolution, the party of international Communism. The first steps taken along this line (the agreement of the four organizations at the Paris Conference) are a beginning full of promise to all revolutionary workers. We must devote ourselves to the task of providing the working class with its world Party: The International. What Stalinism has destroyed, the International Communist League must reconstruct. The future of the proletariat and of the revolution depend on the League. Every revolutionary militant must be conscious of this enormous task and devote himself to it in order to raise once more the banner of International Communism and carry it forward in every country.

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SPECIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BRAZIL

At a special national conference on October 1, the International Communist League of Brazil formulated its position on the question of a Fourth International. We give below the two main resolutions adopted by the Conference.

Resolution on a New International

After a profound discussion on the New International, the Special National Conference, by vote of the delegates present, adopts the following resolution:

The defeat of the German proletariat as a result of the shameful capitulation of the Third International before Hitler, has shown that facts confirm the forecast of the Left Opposition on the further fate of Stalinist centrism.

If the victory of Fascism in Germany has not been enough to wake the German C. P. and the Comintern out of their sectarian bureaucracy and lead them to a new political life, then nothing in the world can regenerate them.

The road of reform, which has been that of the Left Opposition for ten years, has finally reached its end.

After the catastrophe of the German proletariat, Fascism has become an imminent international danger. To leave the working masses under the old Social Democratic or Stalinist leadership, when they are desperate under the blow of defeat, would be tantamount to abandoning in advance to the bloody knife of Fascism the immediate future of the world proletarian revolution.

The basic and immediate task on which the fate of the international proletarian movement depends, consists of drawing the lesson of the terrible defeat which the proletarian revolution has sustained in Europe's most industrialized country.

At all costs the German working class and that of other countries must be made to understand the reasons for this defeat. By all means it must be shown that these causes did not all lie in any so-called historical fatality invented to hide the errors of the C. I. The masses must be shown that, if they have not vanquished the class enemy, the fault is not that the correlation of forces was favorable to Fascism or that the economic situation of capitalism was not ripe for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

All the objective conditions for the victory of the proletariat existed. The defeated masses must learn that the only thing they lacked was a correct political leadership, a really revolutionary political line.

Now, to say political leadership is to say political party, a vanguard revolutionary political organization. Hence the absolute necessity of substituting new revolutionary cadres of the proletarian vanguard for the former leadership which has betrayed the proletariat.

But this revolutionary organization can not remain enclosed within the national frontiers of each country.

Today in the imperialist epoch there can be no true Communist policy which is not international, just as socialism cannot be built in a single country.

For the Communist Right wing, the revolutionary C. I. is the sum of national parties, without any centralized international leadership. This is the policy of the Brandeburgers in Germany, who proclaim the infallibility of Stalinist policy in the Soviet Union, hoping the C. I. will, in compensation, give them full freedom of action in Germany. The Bolshevik-Leninists have nothing in common with this opportunism. Proletarian internationalism is not a subjective tool, but an objective historic necessity.

Consequently the organization of new revolutionary cadres can be achieved only on a world scale under a centralized international leadership. This is why the problem of new parties is intimately linked to the problem of creating a new International. This is our immediate historic task. It must be proclaimed that the Social Democracy and National Communism are liquidated. The Third International is less and less an organization of the masses and more and more an agency of counter-revolutionary perversion by the Stalinist bureaucracy within the labor movement.

The crisis of world capitalism and the German defeat have given birth to two contradictory currents in the world labor movement. On the one hand under the crushing weight of defeat, many proletarian elements fall into political indifference or even into the Fascist camp, when they do not allow themselves to give way to anarchist desperation. On the other hand, there is a profound shaking of the masses, who come from reformism and move toward the left, thereby directly speeding up the process of final dissolution of the Second International. All the Social Democratic parties of the world are today threatened by splits. Organizations which until now have been independent, and others which have hardly broken away from the Social Democracy, evolve decisively toward the revolutionary Communist camp. It is up to the Bolshevik-Leninists to do all possible to speed up this revolutionary evolution of the masses. To do this it is necessary to have a clear and immediate perspective, and this perspective can be given only by the creation of a new international proletarian organism.

Alongside the extremely tense situation of class struggle on a world scale—which necessarily leads from one moment to the other to the ruin of either the Fascist camp or that of the proletariat, there is the profoundly difficult situation, internal as well as external, of the Soviet State.

However one estimates the degree of degeneration of the Soviet State, one thing can no longer be contested: the Stalinist bureaucracy is inevitably pushing the U. S. S. R. toward final liquidation, just as it has led the C. I. to defeat.

The ever more shameless treason and capitulation of Soviet diplomacy in the face of imperialism can no longer be masked. Mussolini himself has already proclaimed that it is necessary for the capitalist countries to assist the Soviet government to get out of its isolation.

The workers state is entirely defenseless within as well as without.

Only a new revolutionary policy of the European or world proletariat, by setting up a dike against imperialist and Fascist reaction, can save the Soviet Union from irremediable and imminent catastrophe. The new International will, therefore, be the best revolutionary aim that can be forged under present conditions for the defense of the U. S. S. R. against imperialist war as well as for the regeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat within the Soviet boundaries.

The duty of the Bolshevik-Leninists, then is indicated with absolute clarity by the world situation. It is a question of achieving a gigantic historical turn: of regrouping the proletarian masses to lead them directly in an assault on capitalism. The immensity of this task and the peculiar conditions of depression in the proletarian revolutionary movement, indicate also that it cannot be accomplished by a resolution of the I. L. O. It demands first of all systematic and persistent preparation before it becomes a concrete reality.

We are now only on the first lap of this historic task, at the opening of our propaganda work among the proletarian masses on behalf of the banner of the Fourth International, which will be historically the dialectical continuer of the International of Marx and the International of Lenin. For whose banner it must be born and for whose banner it must conquer.

Resolution on the U. S. S. R.

The building of a new Communist Party in the U. S. S. R. means that the road of peaceful reform of the official party has entirely vanished.

As a result of the isolation of the Russian proletariat and the defeats of the international proletariat, the political rule of the working class in the Soviet state has been usurped by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The economic structure constituted by the Socialist nature of the property system is the only existing ground today for still characterizing the Soviet State as a workers' State.

In the defense of this State, the Bolshevik-Leninists must use every possible political means, including insurrectional means and a united front with bureaucratic centrism.

The domination of the bureaucracy over the State makes such defense impossible, however, and constitutes the essential condition for the reestablishment of capitalism.

The task of the new Communist Party in the U. S. S. R. must be nothing but the regrouping of the proletarian vanguard which must lead the masses with the aim of defeating the ruling bureaucracy and reestablishing politically the proletarian dictatorship.

The International Bulletin will appear regularly in printed form. Some issues will be larger than eight pages but the price will remain the same. We shall expect also to be able to print subsequent issues on a better grade of paper.—Ed.