Genesis of Trotskyism

The first ten years of the Left Opposition

by Max Shachtman with an introduction by Tariq Ali

Introduction

The autumn of this year will see revolutionary marxists throughout the world commemorating and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Left Opposition inside the Russian Communist Party. There will be meetings, and cadre schools, during which the debates of the Twenties will come to life again and will help us understand the subsequent degeneration of the Russian Revolution. The production of this pamphlet is, therefore, not only timely, but also extremely useful for providing militants with a comprehensible introduction to the politics of the Left Opposition, the direct forebear of the Fourth International.

While there has been no *serious* discussion within the ranks of the British Communist Party on the role of the Left Opposition, there has also been little serious analysis by marxists "independent" of both the CP and the Trotskyist groups. Most of them have tended to view the Left Opposition and the struggle waged by it as romantic, brave, idealistic, but utopian. This view has gained wide currency. It is, however, totally misconceived and the politics of the left opposition with the politically wrong and unrealistic positions of the "Workers' Opposition", which were rejected by Trotsky and all the other leaders of the Left Opposition. We hope that the publication of this short text by Max Shachtman will only be the beginning of a discussion of a very vital period in the history of the Russian workers' state. We also hope that militants in the Communist Party will participate in this debate as it raises a whole number of important questions, (inner-party democracy, industrialisation, 'socialism in one country') which help to explain the nature of the present regime in the Soviet Union and its orientation.

The defeat of the German Revolution in the autumn of 1923 and the illness and subsequent death of Lenin in January 1924 were two important milestones in the history of the Russian Revolution. The fact that they both coincided made the formation of the Left Opposition inevitable. Both these events enormously strengthened the weight of the bureaucracy in the apparatus of the workers' state and as a result made it easier for the faction most closely tied to the bureaucracy (i.e. the grouping around Stalin) to extend its tentacles within the party. Towards the end of 1923, Trotsky pointed out the dangers inherent in this situation in a biting series of articles entitled *The New Course*. This coincided with the 'Platform of the 46', signed by 46 members of the Party including Preobrazhensky, Smirnov, Antonov-Ovseyenko, Muralov and Sosnovsky. A fusion of the two resulted in the formation of the Left Opposition in 1923-24, the International Left Opposition in 1930 and the Fourth International in 1938. Of course many supporters became demoralised and capitulated to Stalin (only to be executed during the Purges), others preferred to commit suicide (Joffe), while the rank-and-file of the Opposition, comprising thens of thous-

ands of the most politically conticious Bolsheviks were sent to camps in Siberia where most of them were liquidated.

Max Shachtman, too, found it difficult to swim against the stream. One of the founders of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, Shachtman found the situation too difficult in the late '30's and broke with the Fourth International because of its characterisation of the Soviet Union as a "workers' state". The purges, the Stalin-Hitler Pact, the occupation of parts of Poland and the invasion of Finland by the Red Army, proved to be too much for Shachtman. He refused any longer to accept Trotsky's characterisation of the USSR as a "workers' state" governed by a bureaucratic *caste*, but which had to be defended against imperialism. The Soviet Thermidor had taken place on a *political* and not on a social and economic level. Trotsky's analysis of the extremely complex social, political and economic realities of Soviet society have provided us with the *only* scientific definition of "bureaucracy" in relation to a state where capitalism as a mode of production has been destroyed. Shachtman advanced new theories of the bureaucracy as a new ruling class in a system he categorised as "bureaucratic collectivism". In his battle against the "new class" Shachtman joined the camp of social-democracy and became a supporter of "democratic" capitalism. He died on November 4, 1972 at the age of sixty-eight, a firm supporter of the capitalist system and of American imperialism. Like many others he had found the task of being a Trotskyist militant too burdensome and justified his capitulation by a theoretical rationalisation which finally led him into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Trotskyists in the Thirties were indeed confronted with an extremely infavourable objective situation, which it is not easy for many militants in the Fourth International today to appreciate. It was only the toughest cadres of American Trotskyism who survived in the face of capitalist repression and Stalinist brutality. The fact that even a man like Max Shachtman found the revolutionary road too tortuous shows us even more clearly the importance of the comrades who built the Trotskyist movement in the States in the 30's, militants such as Jim Cannon, Farell Dobbs and Joe Hansen.

This pamphlet was first published in 1933 on the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Left Opposition. In 1973 we will observe the 50th anniversary, but in a vastly changed situation globally. The new rise of world revolution has created an irreparable split within the ranks of the world Stalinist movement; the ideological influence of social-democracy has declined considerably and the appearance of a radicalised vanguard of mass proportions has begun to convert the sections of the Fourth International from mere propaganda groups into revolutionary political organisations capable of initiating mass actions. The role of the Fourth International in building a movement in solidarity with the Indochinese revolution in many different parts of the world has been the most symbolic expression of this change.

Thus the 50th anniversary of the Left Opposition will be celebrated this year by tens of thousands of revolutionaries all over the world. This pamphlet could play a useful role in this regard.

Tariq Ali
10th February 1973

Foreword

Since this pamphlet was first written, a number of events have taken place which should be borne in mind in reading what follows. Outstanding among these events is the cruel defeat suffered by the German working class at the hands of triumphant Fascism. The victory of the barbaric capitalist reaction in Germany was made possible essentially by the impotence of the proletariat. In turn, that was induced by the craven treachery of the party of the Second International, and the bankruptcy into which the official Communist party was thrown by Stalinism.

The collapse of the German Communist party removes from the dwindling ranks of the Communist International the last of its sections possessing any mass following or influence. What is left of this organization lies prostrate, bleeding from a thousand wounds, rendered incapable of rising again as a revolutionary or progressive force by the stranglehold of the Russian Soviet bureaucracy.

The defeat of the German proletariat and its Communist party is the terrifying payment they were forced to make for the demoralization, disorientation and bureaucratic Centrism to which they were subjected for ten years by the Stalinist machine. The German working class must now suffer all the diabolical torture of the Hitlerite savages, and as a consequence, the working class of the entire world is also set back. Not because the triumph of Fascism was inevitable. Quite the contrary. Had the German proletariat been mobilized in the united front movement for which we agitated unremittingly, and for which we were condemned as counter-revolutionists and "social-Fascists," the Brown Shirts would have been crushed and never have reached the seat of power. The social democrats on the one hand, and the Stalinists on the other, stood like boulders in the path of the working class. Instead of the accelerator of the revolution, the Stalinists acted as a brake upon it.

This foreword can pretend only to the briefest reference to the new problems, for a more extensive elucidation of which the voluminous literature of our movement must

be consulted. Suffice it to say that the German events, and the bureaucratic self-contentment and unconcern, deepening of the errors and disintegration of Stalinism and its parties which followed them, have brought us to the ineluctable conclusion:

That the Communist International has been strangled by Stalinism, is bankrupt, is beyond recovery or restoration on Marxian foundations;

That the internally devoured Stalinist parties which proved so impotent at the decisive moment of struggle against the class enemy in China, then in swift succession in Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, now in Czechoslovakia, tomorrow elsewhere—will never be able to deal with the burning problems of the struggle in any of the other countries;

That this holds true especially, and above all, of the situation in the Soviet Union, where the dangers to the workers' state multiply without a corresponding growth of strength of the proletarian organizations;

That the wealth of past experience and the whole of the present world situation dictate to the earnest revolutionist the course of breaking relentlessly and completely with the decadent Stalinist apparatus and embarking upon the course of building up a new Communist International and new Communist parties in every country of the world.

The Left Opposition, breaking with its past policy of acting as a faction of the official party, has solemnly dedicated itself to this tremendous historical task. To the new movement it offers that rich and comprehensive experience, that tested and verified body of revolutionary ideas and criticism which it developed in the ten years of its existence as a distinct current in the revolutionary movement. It came into being as the direct heir and executor of fundamentally the same tendency which originated with Marx and Engels, was first victorious in the Russian revolution, and will find its full fruition in the world revolution for the liberation of human kind.

— *M. S.*

November 1933

The Left Opposition and the Communist Movement

The Communist movement throughout the world is passing through a terrific crisis. From the day the Communist International was founded in Moscow in 1919, it has experienced several critical periods. A clear dividing line, however, cuts those into two principal parts. One covers the first five years of the International, during which are generally recorded crises of growth, in which the parties were purged of accidental and non-Communist elements. On the other side of the line are the last nine years, with an almost uninterrupted crisis of decline, during which the revolutionary wing was amputated from the parties.

The marks of this crisis are evident for all who have eyes to see with. In its early years the Communist International was a virile, growing movement whose authority, prestige and success rose in every land under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky. The present leadership of the International has reduced it to stagnation or decline. A crisis which shakes the capitalist world as it has never been shaken since the world war, finds the International powerless to act. In Spain, a popular uprising of the masses offers the Communists their first big opportunity to lead a proletarian battle for emancipation; only, there is no Communist party. In England, France, the United States, Czechoslovakia, the Scandinavian countries, Poland, China, India—in all those countries where Communism was once represented by mass parties or parties on the road to embracing masses—the section of the International writhes in the agony of impotence.

With insignificant exceptions, not one of the authentic leaders of world Communism during the first years of its organized existence, is to be found in its ranks today—including, and primarily, the Russian party. Everywhere, the Communist parties have become sieves into which ever new sections of the working class are poured by the capitalist crisis, only to be lost through the holes of bureaucratism and false policies. Almost thirteen years after the founding of the International, the overwhelming majority of its greatly reduced membership has not been in the party ranks for longer than two years; the old members have been lost or expelled.

Why is this disastrous situation of concern to every worker conscious of his class interests? For the following reasons:

Communism is the hope of the whole working class.

A classless socialist commonwealth cannot be attained without the overthrow of the rule of capitalism. To accomplish this aim is the historic mission of the working class. The sharpest and most effective instrument at the command of the workers in the struggle against their class enemy, is the revolutionary political party. Such a party is not the work of one day or one man. It grows out of the needs of the class whose interests it represents, until it embraces the most advanced, the most militant and the best tested fighters.

When the ruling class has lost the following of the masses, when it can no longer satisfy even their most elementary daily needs, and when the masses transfer their confidence to their own class party—the ranks of the latter are strengthened and steeled to the point where it is enabled to fight the final battle. In raising the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, a new page is opened up in human history, for the workers cannot liberate themselves without emancipating the whole of humanity. To lead the proletariat in this titanic inspiring struggle modern history offers as the most highly developed, as the only possible leadership—the Communist party.

The only other party that presumes to speak in the name of labor is the social democracy, or the socialist party. But in reality, it is the party of the petty bourgeoisie, the last pillar of capitalist democracy. From a defense of "democracy in general," it switches to the defense of "democracy in particular," that is, a defense of its specific capitalist fatherland. It sacrifices the interests of the world proletariat to the interests of its own national labor aristocracy and middle class.

During the war, the socialists were the main instruments of imperialism in the ranks of the working class. They supported the imperialist war, each in the interests of his own ruling class. After the war, the socialists missed no opportunity to range themselves on the side of the capitalist class in the fierce struggle to put down the revolutionary proletariat—by force of arms, if necessary.

From its foundation day, the Communist International declared pitiless war against socialist treachery, against corruption and degeneration in the working class, against bureaucratism and opportunism. The Communist parties everywhere were born and grew up in combat against socialist reaction. The torn, confused and scattered ranks of the revolutionary movement throughout the world were reunited under the banner of the Russian revolution and world Communism. Into the darkness of reaction which

the socialists had propped up firmly in the saddle, the Communists brought the light of working class progress. They broke the strangulating noose of class collaboration which the socialists had tightened around the neck of the proletariat. The masses were once more led upon the road of class struggle. In every field of proletarian endeavor — in the trade unions, in strikes, in parliament, in demonstrations, in the cooperatives, in the sports organizations — the Communists reawakened the depressed spirit of the workers, fortified them with new courage, enlightened them with new ideas, inspired them to new militancy. The postwar reaction in every land found only the young Communist movement standing up to give warning to the blood and profit soaked bourgeoisie — not merely that its offensive against labor would not proceed without resistance, but that labor itself was taking the offensive to uproot the decaying old society and to found a new one.

Communism — the ideal revived by the Russian Bolshevik revolution — was and remains the hope of the oppressed and exploited. But if the party of Communism is incapable of successfully leading the struggle for emancipation, no other force will ever unseat the rule of capital. This is why the condition and development of the Communist International vitally affects all workers. Our internal disputes and struggles are not, therefore, a private affair. They concern the whole working class.

The Left Opposition, organized in this country as the Communist League of America (Opposition), was born out of the crisis in the Communist International. Its efforts are directed at solving this crisis. This stupendous task requires the cooperation of the greatest possible number of Communist and class conscious militants. In order to gain this cooperation and so that it may be of greater value than mere sentimental sympathy, it is necessary to understand the origin and the nature of the crisis in Communism at the most important points in its development. In examining into them, the reader will at the same time be able to check the views of the Left Opposition against the actual course of events; nothing can serve as a more conclusive test of conflicting views in the revolutionary movement.

The Fight for Party Democracy

Like the Communist International itself, the Left Opposition quite naturally was formed in the crucible of the world revolution, the Soviet Union. It took shape for the first time as a distinct grouping in the Communist party in 1923, headed by Leon Trotsky, who stood with Lenin as the outstanding leader of the Russian revolution and the Communist International.

The workers' republic was at that moment passing through a difficult period. With the New Economic Policy (N. E. P.), adopted in 1921, a large measure of success had been obtained in restoring the economic life of the country. The relationships between the workers and peasants, upon which rests the security of the proletarian dictatorship in Russia, were strengthened. Most of the rigors of the "War Communism" days, when the revolution fought against civil war and imperialist intervention, were overcome. At the same time, however, new problems were arising, sometimes so acutely that they took on the forms of a crisis.

To use the commonly accepted term coined by Trotsky, the workers' republic was passing through a "scissors" crisis. The "opening" of the scissors represented the gap created by the rise in the price of manufactured commodities and the decline in the price of agricultural products. The problem was to bring prices in both sectors into closer harmony with each other.

Factories were finding it difficult to dispose of their products and production was consequently slowed down. Wages were paid with decreasing regularity and paid in a depreciated money which failed to satisfy the needs of the workers. Not only did unemployment grow, but the workers and peasants found it increasingly hard to purchase manufactured goods. The discontentment of the workers even took the form of strikes.

The situation also accentuated the dissatisfaction of the members of the Communist party. While the "War Communism" atmosphere was largely eliminated from the country's economy, after the counter-revolution had been smashed and the N. E. P. put into effect, it still prevailed within the party. The intensely military regime imposed upon the party by the demands of the civil war, had not merely outlived the war period itself but had, in some respects, become more dangerous. A vast hierarchy of appointed officials had taken the place of a freely elected party apparatus. The initiative and independence of the rank and file party member were being stifled. The entrenchment of a bureaucratic caste was producing clan-

destine factional groupings in the party, with Menshevik or anarcho-syndicalist coloration, it is true, but nevertheless reflecting a deep dissatisfaction of the party membership.

The danger of bureaucratism and the need for workers' democracy in the party had been openly indicated by Lenin before his illness compelled him to withdraw from active party life. He had not only written some scathing passages against bureaucratism and the bureaucrats, but he had even urged Trotsky to undertake, on behalf of both of them, an energetic campaign in the party to purge it of this destructive cancer. The Tenth Party Congress, under Lenin's direction, had already adopted a resolution for the vigorous execution of the policy of party democracy. After the Twelfth Congress, which reaffirmed the resolution, it was still permitted to remain a dead letter, and the increasingly bad situation was not improved to any degree.

A picture of conditions in the party was given at that time by so staunch a supporter of the leading faction as Bucharin himself:

"If we conducted an investigation and inquired how often our party elections are conducted with the question from the chair, 'Who is for?' and 'Who is against?' we should easily discover that in the majority of cases our elections to the party organizations have become elections in quotation marks, for the voting takes place not only without preliminary discussion, but according to the formula, 'Who is against?' And since to speak against the authorities is a bad business the matter ends right there.

"If you raise the question of our party meetings, then how does it go here? . . . Election of the presidium of the meeting. Appears some comrade from the District Committee, presents a list, and asks, 'Who is against?' Nobody is against, and the business is considered finished . . . With the order of the day, the same procedure . . . The chairman asks, 'Who is against?' Nobody is against. The resolution is unanimously adopted. There you have the customary type of situation in our party organizations. It goes without saying that this gives rise to an enormous wave of dissatisfaction. I gave you several examples from the life of our lowest branches. The same thing is noticeable in a slightly changed form in the succeeding ranks of our party hierarchy."

To meet this situation, Trotsky addressed a letter to the Central Committee of the party on October 8, 1923, expressing his views on the condition of the national econo-

my and the party. He was followed by a letter signed by 46 of the party leaders who joined hands with him on most of the essential ideas he had set down. In addition, Trotsky devoted a series of articles to the situation which were assembled into a pamphlet called "The New Course"—the phrase used to define the turn which Trotsky urged the party to make in the realm of economics and within its own ranks. The fight made by Trotsky, in which he was immediately joined by what was called the "Moscow Opposition," centered around the demand for a genuine application of the resolution on workers' democracy and the coordination of industry with agriculture on the basis of a plan in economy.

The Opposition's demand, contrary to the absurd arguments of the ruling faction, had nothing in common with the Menshevik fight for "pure democracy." The Mensheviks and other Right wing socialists everywhere have always stood on the platform of overthrowing the proletarian dictatorship in Russia and restoring a regime of capitalist "democracy." Under it the Russian socialists would be able to operate in the same treacherously respectable manner that has made their brethren the world over so odious.

The Opposition demanded workers' democracy in order to prevent a bureaucratic degeneration of the party and the proletarian dictatorship. The warnings of Trotsky in 1923, in which he merely elaborated Lenin's words that "history knows degenerations of all sorts," were denounced as slanders by that very same "Old Guard" and "Leninist Central Committee" which broke into dozens of fragments in the years that followed.

The program for restoring workers' democracy and eliminating the bureaucratic deformities which were beginning to cripple the party and the dictatorship, had another important aspect. From the very beginning, it was coupled with the perspective of speeding up the industrialization of economically backward Russia.

Trotsky pointed out that the workers' republic could overcome the obstacle of a primitively organized and managed agriculture and enter the broad highway towards socialism, only by laying a solid foundation in the form of big-scale machine industry. With such a base, the proletariat would be able to satisfy the needs of the peasantry for cheap manufactured products. By pursuing a policy of systematically reducing the economic and political importance of the exploiting peasants (the Kulaks), it would commence in earnest the socialist transformation of an agriculture provided with the technical equipment of large

industry.

To accomplish these ends, Trotsky advocated the centralization of national economy and its harmonized direction by means of a national, long-term plan, pointing to the successes attained in 1920 by planned economy in the field of restoring the efficiency of railroad transportation. The antagonism which the proposal for economic planning met in the party leadership in those days is astounding in the face of the general acceptance of the idea a decade later and the tremendous progress made by applying planned economy five years after it was first advanced in the party by the Opposition.

The essence of the dispute on this score was not put badly by Zinoviev, a violent opponent of Trotsky at the time and spokesman for the Stalin-Bucharin-Zinoviev majority faction, in his speech of January 6, 1924: "It seems to me, comrades, that the obstinate persistence in clinging to a beautiful plan is intrinsically nothing else than a considerable concession to the old-fashioned view that a good plan is a universal remedy, the last word in wisdom. Trotsky's standpoint has greatly impressed many students. 'The Central Committee has no plan, and we really must have a plan!' is the cry we hear today from a certain section of the students. The reconstruction of economics in a country like Russia is indeed the most difficult problem of our revolution . . . We want to have transport affairs managed by Dzherzhinsky; economics by Rykov; finance by Sokolnikov; Trotsky, on the other hand, wants to carry out everything with the aid of a 'state plan.'"

In this as in every other case where the majority came into conflict with the Opposition, the course of the class struggle took it upon itself to justify a hundred times over the point of view originally advanced by Trotsky and his comrades. The majority met the Opposition's program for planned economy with the only weapons at their command—ridicule, abuse, and misrepresentation. In the end they were reluctantly compelled to borrow wholesale from the very same program to vote against which they had years before mobilized the whole Communist movement.

Unable to meet the Opposition on the questions which it actually raised, the party leaders resorted to all manner of demagogy. What Trotsky actually wrote was twisted and distorted beyond recognition. Where he advocated drawing the young Communist generation closer into the leadership so that it might restore its vitality, his standpoint was presented to the party as if he stood for

pitting the "young" against the "old"—the timeworn trick of an opportunistic bureaucracy. Where he pointed out that the principal cause for the formation of so many factions in the party resided in the repression of all initiative and criticism from the ranks, he was charged with defending factions as a principle. Where he pointed out that all history revealed that no leadership was immune from degeneration, that the party must take drastic measures to guard against the rise of bureaucratism—the others charged him with declaring that the party had degenerated and the revolution had been swamped by a bureaucracy. Where he pointed out that the town must lead the country, the worker the peasant, and industry agriculture—he was subjected to the reactionary accusation of "underestimating the peasantry."

With the tremendous apparatus at their command, the party leaders were able to swing to their support a majority of the party members. The control of the machinery of the Communist International further facilitated the "voting down" of the Opposition in the parties abroad, in which not one-tenth of the members had ever seen or read what Trotsky himself actually wrote and stood for!

One of the main reasons for the comparative ease with which a majority was rigged up against the Left wing of the party was the event which took place almost at the same time as the Russian discussion. This was the October 1923 retreat of the Communists in Germany, which had a powerful effect not only on the Russian discussion but also on the life of the international Communist movement for several years to come.

The Lessons of October

Germany in the autumn of 1923 was confronted with a revolutionary situation favorable in the highest degree to the proletariat. The Communist party was not only growing steadily, but the ruling class encountered new difficulties every day. The occupation of the Ruhr by France reenacted the World War on a smaller scale and brought to the breaking point all those contradictions of European capitalism which the Versailles Treaty had only accentuated. So ripe was the situation that, as Trotsky wrote, "it became quite clear that the German bourgeoisie could extricate itself from this 'inextricable' position only

if the Communist party did not understand at the right time that the position of the bourgeoisie was 'inextricable' and did not draw the necessary revolutionary conclusions."

Yet this is precisely what the Communist party failed to understand and to do. The high point of the revolutionary situation was reached in October. The leadership, steeped in the habits of the gradual and normal accumulation of forces on the side of the party, remained entirely passive or kept to the old pace. The desperate bourgeoisie attacked in military formation, overthrew the socialist-Communist coalition governments in Saxony and Thuringia, and won a decisive victory without the party firing a shot. At the crucial moment, the Communist leaders sounded the call for an ignominious retreat. The party was thrown into despair and the masses into confusion.

The policy pursued by the party leaders in Germany was not peculiar to Brandler and Thalheimer. It was derived from the leadership of the Communist International and the Russian Communist party, that is, of the same faction which had launched the war against Trotsky a few months previously. The fatal policy of hesitation, doubt, of counting up the armed forces on both sides of the barricades to see which class had a majority of one soldier—was injected into the veins of the already sluggish and timid German party leaders by the equally timid and hesitant Russian party leaders.

Here is what Stalin wrote to Zinoviev and Bucharin in August 1923 about the situation in Germany: "Should the Communists (at the present stage) strive to seize power without the social democracy?—are they ripe for this already?—this in my opinion is the question. . . . If now in Germany, the power, so to say, will fall and the Communists will seize it, they will fall through with a crash. This is in the 'best' case. And in the worst—they'll be smashed to bits and thrown back. The thing is not in this, that Brandler wants to teach the masses, but that the bourgeoisie plus the Right social democracy would surely turn this teaching-demonstration into a general slaughter (at present they have all the chances for it) and would destroy them. Certainly the Fascists are not napping, but it is more advantageous to us for the Fascists to attack first: this will rally the whole working class around the Communists. (Germany is not Bulgaria.) Besides, the Fascists in Germany, according to the data we have, are weak. In my estimation the Germans must be restrained, not spurred on." What Stalin did was simply to set down in a letter what was uppermost in the minds of all the other members of his faction. Together with

Zinoviev, he failed to heed the criticisms which Trotsky made of the German party leaders, weeks and months before the crucial hour struck. On the contrary, they jumped to the defense of Brandler and Thalheimer. In the official material issued on the September 1923 Plenum of the Russian party Central Committee, weeks before the German retreat, they wrote:

"Comrade Trotsky, before leaving the session of the Central Committee, made a speech which greatly excited all the Central Committee members. He declared in this speech that the leadership of the German Communist Party is worthless and that the Central Committee of the German C. P. is allegedly permeated with fatalism and sleepy-headedness, etc. Comrade Trotsky declared further that under these conditions the German revolution is condemned to failure. This speech produced an astounding impression. Still the majority of the comrades were of the opinion that this philippic was called forth in an incident that occurred at the Plenum of the Central Committee which had nothing to do with the German revolution and that this statement was in contradiction to the objective state of affairs."

It was only after the crushing October defeat that Brandler and Thalheimer were made the scapegoats by Zinoviev and Stalin. They were held to be exclusively responsible for the course to which they had been inspired by the leadership of the Comintern. The establishment of Brandler's culpability in the German situation constituted the beginning and the end of the analysis made by the bureaucracy. And a very convenient analysis it was, for it shifted from the shoulders of Stalin and Zinoviev their own heavy responsibilities for what happened — as well as for what did not happen — in Germany.

But if they were remiss in their duty, the task of examining the German October was brilliantly performed by Trotsky in his "Lessons of October." The essence of this document lies in a masterful comparison of the problems confronting the Russian Bolsheviks on the eve of the insurrection, and how they solved them successfully, with the problems confronting the German and Bulgarian parties and how they failed to solve them. (In September, a month before the October defeat, the Bulgarian Communist party had also suffered a crushing blow which set it back for years.) In summing up his study, which was calculated to educate the Communist parties in the acute problems of the proletarian uprising — seen in the light of a great victory and a grave defeat — Trotsky wrote later on:

"The German defeat of 1923 naturally had many na-

tional peculiarities. But it already contained many typical features, also, which signalized a general danger. This danger can be characterized as the crisis of the revolutionary leadership on the eve of the transition to armed uprising. The depths of the proletarian party are by their very nature far less susceptible to bourgeois public opinion. Certain elements of the party leadership and the middle layers of the party will always unfailingly succumb in larger or smaller measure to the material and ideological terror of the bourgeoisie. Such a danger should not simply be rejected. To be sure, there is no remedy against it suitable for all cases. Nevertheless, the first step towards fighting it—is to grasp its nature and its source. The unfailing appearance of the development of Right groupings in all the Communist parties in the 'pre-October' period is on the one hand a result of the greatest objective difficulties and dangers of this 'jump' but on the other hand the result of a furious assault of bourgeois public opinion. There also lies the whole import of the Right groupings. And that is just why irresolution and vacillations arise unfailingly in the Communist parties at the moment when it is most dangerous. With us, only a minority within the party leadership was seized by such vacillations in 1917, which were, however, overcome, thanks to the sharp energy of Lenin. In Germany, on the contrary, the leadership as a whole vacillated and that was carried over to the party and through it to the class. The revolutionary situation was thereby passed up . . . All these were not of course the last crisis of leadership in a decisive historical moment. To limit these inevitable crises to a minimum is one of the most important tasks of the Communist parties and the Comintern. This can be achieved only when the experiences of October 1917 and the political content of the Right Opposition inside our party at that time are grasped and contrasted with the experiences of the German party in 1923. Therein lies the purpose of the 'Lessons of October.'"

It is precisely this analysis which the Russian party leaders sought with might and main to avoid. When Trotsky spoke of the Right wing in the Russian party in 1917, everybody knew that he referred to Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsky, Stalin and the others who had, at one time or another in the months preceding the Bolshevik uprising, taken a stand against the socialist revolution towards which Lenin and Trotsky were steering the party. They knew, further, that an examination into this highly-important phase of the German retreat would reveal that these same leaders had not risen very much

higher on the revolutionary scale in 1923 than they had in 1917.

As a result, the rich lessons afforded the working class and Communist movements by the defeats in Germany and Bulgaria were not drawn by the leadership of the Communist International. It resolved to sacrifice them in the interests of the struggle against "Trotskyism" which they invented in order to cover up their own disastrous course. The official press was filled with interminable articles and speeches by the party leaders, denouncing and distorting Trotsky's position, boasting of their own "Leninist purity," and demanding that the whole International record itself against the Opposition.

An example of how the Communist International registered itself against Trotsky is offered by the voting in the American party. Although the "Lessons of October" was never printed by the party in the English language and never read by ninety-nine percent of the membership or leadership in the United States, they were all compelled to cast a solemn vote in support of the "Leninist Old Guard" and in condemnation of Trotsky's views. This pernicious system was later extended and sanctified to such a degree that in every subsequent dispute between the bureaucracy and the Opposition, it was taken for granted that the latter was wrong. It had to be attacked even though its viewpoint was never made public to the Communist workers.

This corruption of the parties became the characteristic feature that distinguished all the following years of the campaign against the Left Opposition, down to this very day. Nor could it be otherwise. Whoever is sure of his position need not fear the presentation of the opposing standpoint. Only those who are obliged to defend a false position, must use the bureaucratic means of suppressing the contrary standpoint, for in an objective and democratically organized discussion the incorrect view would be unable to stand up under fire.

The Theory of Socialism in One Country

The defeat of the September 1923 insurrection in Bulgaria and the October retreat in Germany, followed a few months later by the crushing of the Reval uprising in Esthonia, opened up a new period of development in Europe, replete with far-reaching consequences. The retreat in Germany gave the bourgeoisie the breathing

space it sought and needed. A few months later, the enfeebled system of German capitalism was reinvigorated by the injections of gold it received under the Dawes plan. In England, the MacDonald Labor government came into power for the first time. In France, the liberal Herriot ministry was established and the immediate danger of a new "Ruhr attack" upon Germany receded into the political background.

Among the terrific effects of the fatal German retreat, could already be discerned the following: the big post-war tidal wave of revolution had definitely ebbed. A period of bourgeois democratic pacifism was opening up in Europe. In Central Europe, at the very least, the Communist movement was weakened by the defeats suffered: and these same defeats had given the social democracy a new lease on life.

None of these symptoms of the period was acknowledged by the Comintern leadership. When they were pointed out by Trotsky, who proposed that the International should direct its course in harmony with the newly created situation, he was simply attacked as a . . . liquidator. As late as the Fifth Congress of the Comintern, in 1924, Stalin, Zinoviev, Bucharin and all the other Trotsky-baiters proclaimed that the revolutionary situation was right ahead, that the October defeat was a mere episode and that the Opposition had lost faith in the revolution!

As the weeks extended into months, they threw a cold light upon this light-minded analysis. It became clear to all that the revolutionary wave had actually receded. In the minds of those who accused the Opposition of "liquidationism" arose the conviction that the revolution in Western Europe was postponed for a long, long time to come. What remained to be done, thought the bureaucrats, was to consolidate what had already been conquered — Russia — and to cease expending energy upon a western European revolution which had dropped to the bottom of the agenda.

It is under these circumstances, and with this pessimistic frame of mind into which the Centrist and Right wing party bureaucracy worked itself, that the theory of "socialism in one country" was developed. According to this theory, which deals with the fundamental question dividing the Left Opposition from the Right wing and the Centrist faction in the Communist movement, a classless socialist society can be built up in one single country alone, the Soviet Union, even if the proletariat in the more advanced countries does not succeed in seizing power.

The mere formulation of the theory reveals that its authors could have produced it only if their belief in the world revolution was shattered. It is impossible to conceive that Russia will complete a classless society sooner than the workers of one country or another in Europe will seize power.

Losovsky, the head of the Red International of Labor Unions, only expressed what was uppermost in the minds of his associates at that time when he wrote that the stabilization of Europe would last for decades. (This was some time after the Dawes Plan, when even the Stalinists were compelled to acknowledge the advent of a precarious capitalist stabilization.) If that were the case, the Leninist dictum that we are living in a period of wars and proletarian revolution, no longer held good. In any case, the revolution was a long way off. Then what point is there in bending our energies upon revolutions outside of Russia which will not take place, especially when there is so much to be "done at home," and more especially, when "we have all the prerequisites needed to build up a socialist society by ourselves"?

Utopian socialists and nationalists have advocated the theory of socialism in a single country before this time. In Germany today, the theory of an "independent" national economy, which progressively diminishes its connection with world economy to the vanishing point—"autarchy," as it is called—is the reactionary ideal of Hitler's Fascists.

In the Communist movement this idea was never heard of until the fateful days of 1924. Marx and Engels specifically polemicized against the idea of a national socialist utopia in all their writings. Even Stalin was compelled to admit that the two founders of scientific socialism never entertained the idea, when he said that the possibility of building socialism in a single country was "first formulated by Lenin in 1915." (As will be seen, even the reference to Lenin is entirely unfounded.)

The program of the Bolshevik party under which it carried out the 1917 revolution, does not contain a reference to this theory. The program of the Young Communist League of Russia, adopted in 1921 under the supervision of Bucharin and the Central Committee of the party, says that Russia "can arrive at Socialism only through the world proletarian revolution, which epoch of development we have now entered." The draft of an international program at the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922, submitted by Bucharin and Thalheimer, says not a word about the possibility of building a socialist society in one country alone. The same congress, in its unani-

mously adopted resolution on the Russian revolution, "reminds the proletarians of all countries that the proletarian revolution can never be completely victorious within one single country, but that it must win the victory internationally, as the world revolution."

In 1919, Bucharin, one of the later prophets of the evangel of national socialism, wrote that "the period of the great development of the productive forces (to say nothing of completing a socialist society! — M. S.) can begin only with the victory of the proletariat in several large countries." Lenin asserted "in many of our works, in all our speeches and in the whole of our press that matters in Russia are not such as in the advanced capitalist countries, that we have in Russia a minority of industrial workers and an overwhelming majority of small agrarians. The social revolution in such a country can be finally successful only on two conditions: first, on the condition that it is given timely support by the social revolution of one or several advanced countries . . . Second, that there be an agreement between the proletariat which establishes the dictatorship or holds State power in its hands and the majority of the peasantry. We know that only an agreement with the peasantry can save the social revolution in Russia so long as the revolution in other countries has not arrived."

Stalin himself, who first formulated the theory of national socialism, wrote in the first edition of his "Problems of Leninism" that "the main task of socialism — the organization of socialist production — still remains ahead. Can this task be accomplished, can the final victory of socialism in one country be attained, without the joint efforts of the proletariat of several advanced countries? No, this is impossible . . . For the final victory of socialism, for the organization of socialist construction, the efforts of one country, particularly of such a peasant country as Russia, are insufficient. For this the efforts of the proletarians of several advanced countries are necessary."

It is only in the second edition of the same work, printed in the same year, that he turned this clear and definite conclusion inside out and presented the still cautious formula which has since been developed into an unrestrained nationalistic gospel: "After the victorious proletariat of one country has consolidated its power and has won over the peasantry for itself, it can and must build up the socialist society."

Nothing that has ever been said can refute our characterization of the origin and essence of this theory, born

in the womb of reaction and conceived by a defeatist state of mind. The Left Opposition argued that to build a socialist society in the Soviet Union, the aid of the proletarian revolution in a more advanced country or countries would be required. Together with Stalin and Bucharin, the international apparatus of the Comintern argued that a socialist society could be built up without the "state aid" of the workers in other countries — provided there is no military intervention from the foreign bourgeoisie! And to prevent this intervention, to act merely as frontier guards for the Soviet Union, has now become the principal task of the Communist parties. The emphasis is significant. Previously, the main task of the various parties was the revolution in their respective country, the victory of which is the highest guarantee for the victory of world socialism — including socialism in Russia. Now the Communist parties have been reduced to the position of "Friends" of the Soviet Union.

The "practical" significance of this theoretical dispute cannot be overstated. Socialism is not built in one day. Only petty-bourgeois anarchists believe that the "free society" will be established on the morrow of the overthrow of the bourgeois state. The Marxists know that "the road of organization," in Lenin's words, "is a long road, and the task of socialist construction demands a long-drawn-out, stubborn work and real knowledge which we do not possess to a sufficient degree. Even the next generation, which will be further developed, will probably hardly be able to achieve the complete transition to socialism." If it is argued, as Stalin does, that this long road will be travelled its full length "alone," before the workers in the other countries have overthrown their bourgeoisie, then the world proletarian revolution has been postponed — at least in one's mind — for an indefinite period.

The Opposition believed and declared: The proletarian revolution in the West is far closer to realization than is the abolition of classes and the establishment of a socialist society in Russia. If it is not closer, then the proletarian revolution in Russia is doomed!

This simple truth was repeated a thousand times by Lenin, who had not a grain of "pessimism" or "disbelief in the Russian revolution" in his makeup. "We do not live," he wrote, "merely in a state but in a system of states and the existence of the Soviet republic side by side with imperialist states for any length of time is inconceivable." This idea is permeated to the letter with realistic Marxian internationalism.

What is this internationalism? It is no mere loose senti-

mental addition of national links, uniting the workers of the world in a fairy-chain of phraseological solidarity. It arises directly out of the development of world economy. The imperialist stage of capitalism, its expansion on a world scale, the tremendous and vital importance of exports and imports for the maintenance of capitalism, monopolies extending to the ends of the earth, the mutual dependence of one country upon another — these are some of the phenomena of world economy.

Capitalism has not matured for the socialist revolution in this or that country, large or small, backward or advanced. It has matured for socialism on a world scale. This fact not only creates the basis for a living internationalism, but also for the transformation of the old society by the triumphant proletariat.

But if each country can build an enclosed socialist society by the efforts and resources of its own proletariat, then internationalism becomes a sentimental phrase for holiday resolutions. If it can be completed in backward Russia alone, then surely it can be done in more advanced Germany, in France, in England, and certainly in the United States. What need then have the Communists for a highly centralized international of action of their own?

Furthermore: the development of all existing society up to now, and particularly of modern capitalist society, has been towards increasing world interrelations and interdependence. Capitalism reaches its highest stage of evolution, it develops to its most majestic economic heights, not by retiring into its national shells, but by projecting from each national territory those links which bind it inseparably to the rest of world economy. The economy of the United States, or of France, or of India, is merely the "national" manifestation of a world economy. The countries of the most backward culture, technique and living standards are those that play the smallest role in world economy; and vice versa.

Socialism assumes a vastly higher stage of development than that reached by capitalism in its most flourishing days, a higher culture, technique, and living standard. It means not only the abolition of classes, but the elimination of the difference between worker and peasant, between town and country, the abolition of agriculture by means of its industrialization. But this, in turn, means that a socialist society must develop much further along the economic and technical (that is, the cultural) road than capitalism.

The theory of socialism in one country implies (and its spokesmen state explicitly) that this is to be accomplished by rendering the Soviet Union entirely independent of

the rest of the world. But this can be "accomplished" only by taking the road back from capitalist evolution which went in the opposite direction. The Marxists, in opposition to this reactionary, Utopian idea, declare that the road to socialism presupposes an increasing participation in world economy, not only in the future socialist world economy, but right now, under the conditions of the capitalist world market. For this capitalist world economy is one to which, according to Lenin, "we are subordinated, with which we are connected and from which we cannot escape."

Against the Stalinist theory, the Opposition put forward again the classical formula of Marx and Engels: the Revolution in permanence. This formula, first advanced by the founders of scientific socialism to express the interests of the proletariat at the time when the progressive bourgeoisie, having come to power, sought to establish "order" and bring the revolutionary advance to a halt, was first outlined by Trotsky at the time of the first Russian revolution. In his conception, the approaching revolution in Russia could not stop at the bourgeois democratic stage after the overthrow of Czarist absolutism, but would be driven on inexorably to the socialist stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But it could not remain at this point, either, for the contradictions facing a socialist dictatorship in a single country, and a predominantly agricultural land at that, could be solved only on the international arena. The proletariat, therefore, far from setting itself the Utopian goal of a nationally isolated socialist republic, would inscribe upon its banner the slogan of the permanent revolution; that is, the maintenance of the dictatorship in one land was dependent upon the extension of the proletarian revolution on a world scale, or at least in several of the advanced capitalist countries of Europe.

But if the proletarian revolution in the West is, nevertheless, delayed in coming — what shall we do then? Shall we give up power in the Soviet Union? is the "annihilating" poser put by the Stalinists. Not at all! Lenin and Trotsky, who never believed in the utopia of national socialism, stood for six years at the head of the proletarian dictatorship and never once proposed to "give up power." What they did and what the Left Opposition today proposes to do, was to retain the power in the first fortress conquered by the proletariat. In this fortress, while looking forward to the assistance of the workers in other countries, the position of the socialistic elements in the country must be strengthened as against the capitalist elements. This means the utilization of the "two levers" at the command of the proletariat: the long lever of international

revolution and the shorter lever of laying and strengthening the foundation for a socialist economy at home.

What it certainly does not mean is that the workers and peasants of Russia should be duped with the grandiloquent illusion that at the end of another five years, "socialism will have been established"—on the basis of Russia alone and regardless of what happens to the revolution in Europe, Asia and America. For there will be terrific consequences to account for when the reckoning must be given.

This pernicious theory, which was finally written into the fundamental program of the Communist International in 1928, has brought the greatest harm to the revolutionary movement inside of the Soviet Union and out. From it flowed that unbroken chain of blunders, defeats, catastrophes and setbacks which the Communist movement has suffered since 1924. Among the first of the events in which this theory disclosed its significance was the British General Strike of 1926.

The British General Strike of 1926

After the German October retreat, the Opposition advanced the idea that the immediately revolutionary situation was at an end. The official viewpoint, propounded at the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924, was that the revolutionary wave was first beginning to break. Four months after the decisive German defeat, Zinoviev announced that "Germany is apparently approaching a sharpened civil war." Stalin added: "It is false that the decisive struggles have already been fought, that the proletariat has suffered a defeat in these struggles and the bourgeoisie has grown stronger as a result."

Entirely blind to the fact that a period of capitalist stabilization had set in as a result of their own blunders and shortcomings, the party bureaucracy oriented the Comintern on the basis of an imminent revolutionary upheaval and civil war. But when it became clear even to the blind that the perspective of the Fifth Congress was utterly false, the bureaucracy, intent upon maintaining its own prestige, bolstered up its now discredited predictions by inventing revolutionary phenomena. In a word, the ultraradical phrasemongering of the Fifth Congress led the officialdom directly to opportunism, to painting in revolutionary colors those movements and men who had little or nothing in common with the revolution.

As the revolution did not appear where it was predicted (in Germany and Bulgaria), strenuous efforts were made to discover the revolution where it did not exist. It was in this period, therefore, that scarcely a shrewd petty bourgeois or labor politician on three continents was not hailed as an "acquisition" to the revolutionary movement.

Bourgeois agrarian leaders like Green of Nebraska, Raditch* of Yugoslavia, the Catholic adventurer Miglioli of Italy—were hailed as the "leaders of the revolutionary peasants" in the hotch-potch of the "Red Peasants' International." The World League Against Imperialism was formed by the Comintern as a refuge for those discredited labor politicians, pacifists and bourgeois nationalists standing in need of protection from the rising militancy of the masses who were losing their illusions. American White House lobbyists, Arabian princes, Egyptian nationalists, British labor misleaders, French Freemasons and bourgeois journalists, German and Austrian and Czech doctors and lawyers, guerrilla chiefs and unemployed politicians from Mexico, Catalonia irredentists, Gandhists from India—all of them found a haven in the anteroom of the Comintern. The Kuomintang of the Chinese bourgeoisie was admitted against Trotsky's vote, as a fraternal party into the councils of the Communist International!

Of all the discoveries made in this quest after will-o'-the-wisps that were to prop up the fantastic edifice of the Fifth Congress, the Anglo-Russian Committee proved to be one of the most pernicious. The Committee was made up of the Councils of the trade unions of England and Russia, formed as a result of a British trade-union delegation's visit to the Soviet Union at the end of 1924.

The original aim of the Committee was to further the establishment of international trade-union unity. "The creation of the Anglo-Russian Committee," wrote the Opposition in 1927, "was, at a certain moment, a thoroughly

correct step. Under the influence of the Leftward development of the working masses, the liberal labor politicians, just like the bourgeois liberals at the commencement of a revolutionary movement, took a step towards the Left in order to retain their influence in the masses. To hold them there was entirely correct."

But the scope and attributes of the Committee were speedily extended far beyond its original objective. From a temporary bloc between a revolutionary and a reformist organization for a clearly defined and limited goal, the Committee was endowed by Stalin and Bucharin with capacities and objectives which it could not possibly have. It became, according to Stalin in 1926, "the organization of a broad movement of the working class against new imperialist wars in general and against an intervention in our country, especially on the part of England, the mightiest of the imperialist states of Europe." The Moscow committee of the party announced that "it will become the organizatory center that embraces the international forces of the proletariat for the struggle against every endeavor of the international bourgeoisie to begin a new war."

In vain did the Left Opposition argue against the falsity of this conception which set up the British labor leaders of the Purcell, Cook, Hicks, Swales and Citrine stripe as the revolutionary organizers of the world's working class against imperialist war and for defense of the Soviet republic. As had become the custom, its arguments were not dealt with. It was simply accused of opposing the united front policy and of being in the pay of Sir Austen Chamberlain!

The Stalinist conception of the role and nature of the Anglo-Russian Committee flowed directly from the theory of socialism in one country. According to the latter, Russia could build up its own nationally isolated socialist economy, "if" only foreign military intervention could be staved off. This is the idea which impelled the Stalinists to search frantically for "anti-interventionists" and to convert the Communist parties into Soviet border patrols. Purcell, who needed the alliance with the Soviets as a shield from the attacks of the revolutionary militants in England, was hailed as one of the organizers of the struggle against the military intervention, which alone could prevent Russia from building a socialist society. The trade-union bloc quickly became a political bloc between the reformists of England and the Russian party bureaucracy, not for a moment but for a long time. Hymns of praise were sung to these British labor lieutenants of the bourgeoisie in all the languages of the Comintern. The Committee was desig-

nated as the staunch bulwark of the world proletariat against war and intervention. Only the Opposition declared that the "more acute the international situation becomes the more the Anglo-Russian Committee will be transformed into a weapon of English and international imperialism." Later events fully confirmed this unheeded warning.

The first really serious test of the Anglo-Russian Committee was the British general strike of 1926, which broke out in the midst of the great miners' strike. Just as metals are best tested in fire, so all the assurances of friendship for Russia, of loyalty to British labor and enmity to British imperialism, freely given by Purcell and Co., were subjected to a decisive test in the flames of the general strike. And just as the Opposition had warned, the British General Council, its Left wing as well as its Right, displayed a disgraceful cowardice and treachery, an unshaken loyalty to the ruling class, a hatred and fear of the revolutionary proletariat.

After nine days of the general strike, when a revolutionary situation was engendered in which the power of the ruling class rested not so much in itself as it did in the strength which the labor leaders enjoyed in the working class, the General Council deliberately delivered the death blow to the struggle. In face of the extremely militant mood of the workers, the pitiful helplessness of the bourgeoisie, of such occurrences as the refusal of numerous armed regiments to proceed against the strikers — all the trade-union lackeys of the bourgeoisie rushed to the government buildings to confer with the king's ministers on how to crush the movement.

The "red" veneer with which the Left labor leaders had coated themselves was wiped off in a patriotic frenzy. The financial aid sent to the striking miners from Russia was indignantly rejected with the epithet of "that damned Russian gold." The red flag was hastily dropped for the Union Jack. Purcell and his colleagues proved to be not "the organizatory center that embraces the international forces of the proletariat for struggle," but a most reliable prop of a desperate ruling class. A more annihilating indictment of the Stalinist view and corroboration of the Opposition's, could hardly be imagined.

Where was the Committee as a whole during those stirring days of struggle and treachery? As Kautsky said plaintively about the Second International in 1914: It was only an instrument of peace; in times of war it was worthless.

More correctly, it was worthless to the revolutionists, to Russia. To the British partners in the concern, it had a distinct value. Purcell, Swales and Hicks utilized to the

maximum the prestige accruing to them out of their formal and inexpensive collaboration with the Bolshevik representatives in the Anglo-Russian Committee. Instead of helping to emancipate the British masses from the chains of their false leaders, the A.-R. C. served these leaders as a "Bolshevik" shield from the blows of the rank and file, particularly of the Communists. Purcell, under attack of "his own" Communists, could easily defend his treason by saying: The Russian Communists are different; they do not attack us as you do. Quite the contrary, they sit together with us in harmonious conference.

The Opposition promptly demanded that the prestige enjoyed among the British workers by the A.-R. C. and its Russian half in particular, be employed to expose the treachery of the British leaders. It demanded a demonstrative break with Purcell and Co. so that the latter could no longer hide behind the Russian trade unions. Stalin and Bucharin violently opposed the break—just as violently as, a few years later, they opposed any and every united front not merely with the Purcells but with the "social-Fascist" workers who still followed the reactionary leaders.

For more than a year after the abominable betrayal of the General Strike, Stalin continued to maintain his "united front" with Purcell. The Anglo-Russian Committee would prevent British intervention in Russia and thereby enable the Soviet republic . . . to build up socialism undisturbed.

This fatal course was pursued until the Berlin conference of the Committee in April 1927. Did the Committee protest against the bombardment of Nanking by British gunboats? Did it protest against the police raid upon the Arcos, the Soviet trading organization in London? Did it say a single word about the treachery of its British partner during the general strike and the miners' strike? It did none of these things. But for that, it did adopt an astounding resolution in which Russians and Englishmen both declare:

1. "The only representatives and spokesmen of the trade union movement are the Congress of the British Trade unions and its General Council;

2. " . . . esteems, at the same time, that the fraternal union between the trade union movements of the two countries, incorporated in the Anglo-Russian Committee, cannot and must not violate or restrict their rights and autonomy as the directing organs of the trade union movement of the respective countries; nor interfere in any manner whatsoever in their internal affairs."

This document, which could not but have a stunning effect upon the British Communists, and the Minority

Movement in particular, registered the high-water mark of capitulation to Purcell and Co. (who in turn "capitulated" to Baldwin and the bourgeoisie at every decisive moment). All of this was done in the name of socialism in one country. The failure of Communism to act in a revolutionary manner in England, the prohibition against drawing the basic lessons of the Anglo-Russian Committee experience and the resultant decisive defeat to the movement—set back the Communist forces in Great Britain for years.

The Anglo-Russian Committee was one disappointment after another to those who accepted these illusions as Bolshevism. It was a classic example of how the united front should not be made. The vindication of the standpoint of the Left Opposition, however, was attained at the cost of a new step in the bureaucratic-reformist degeneration of the ruling regime in Russia and the International.

It was not to be the last of such costly vindications. For the same period produced those catastrophic consequences of Stalinist policy which ruined the Chinese revolution.

The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution

When the full history of the second Chinese revolution (1925-1927) is written, it will stand out as an everlasting monument of condemnation to the leadership of Stalin-Bucharin in the Russian party and the International.

Victory lay within reach of the hand for the Chinese workers and peasants, but something unprecedented in history took place: the leadership, clothed in all the formal authority of the Russian revolution and the Communist International, stood in the way like a solid wall. Stalin and Bucharin prohibited the proletariat from taking

power. In the Chinese revolution the epigones played to the end, and with tragic results, the role which Lenin's struggle in the Bolshevik party in April-May 1917 prevented them from playing in the Russian revolution.

The policy of the ruling faction during the most decisive period of the Chinese revolution was, as Trotsky put it, a translation of Menshevism into the language of Chinese politics. The theory of Stalin, Bucharin and Martynov may be summed up as follows:

They proceeded from the standpoint that China, as a semicolonial country, was being submitted to the yoke of imperialism, which pressed down upon the whole nation, and upon all the classes in it, with equal severity. The bourgeoisie was conducting a revolutionary war against imperialism and had to be supported by the masses of workers and peasants. In this struggle victory would be attained with the establishment of a "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants." The "revolutionary anti-imperialist united front" was to be constituted as a "bloc of four classes"—composed of the workers, the peasants, the petty and large bourgeoisie. The embodiment of this "bloc" was the bourgeois Kuo Min Tang, the party of Sun Yat Sen, and after his death, of Chiang Kai-shek and Wang Chin Wei. The Kuo Min Tang, according to Stalin, was a "revolutionary parliament," a "workers' and peasants' party" which the Chinese Communist party was forced to enter as a subordinated group.

Since the bourgeoisie, according to this conception, was conducting an anti-imperialist war against the foreign brigands, the class struggle at home was considered liquidated. For the workers and the Communists to make any serious attacks upon the Chinese bourgeoisie would be to disrupt the "bloc of the four classes." That is why Stalin compelled the Chinese Communists to submit quietly to the decisions of the Nationalist government which established compulsory arbitration in strike struggles. For the same reason, the peasants' movement was checked with an iron hand in telegraphic commands from Moscow. Similarly, the Communists were instructed not to organize Soviets. First, because "Soviets are the instruments of power of the proletarian dictatorship"; secondly, because to form Soviets would mean to overthrow the "revolutionary center" as Stalin called the Nationalist government of the bourgeoisie.

This was the guiding line of the leaders of the Comintern. And it led directly to the victory of the bourgeois counter-revolution, to the massacre of the vanguard of the Chinese proletariat and peasantry by the very "allies"

whom Stalin had chosen for them.

What was the "bloc of four classes" in actuality? It was the form selected by Stalin and Co., in which the Communist, that is, the genuinely revolutionary vanguard, was subordinated, bound hand and foot, and delivered to the Chinese bourgeoisie. In the "bloc" the Chinese Communist party did not retain a shadow of its own independence. The party, in a joint manifesto with the Kuo Min Tang, announced that it differed with the latter only "in some details," that the "united anti-imperialist front" had to be maintained at all costs, and that the Communists pledged themselves not to criticize the petty bourgeois doctrines of Sun Yat Senism. At the height of the revolutionary storm the Communists played such an insignificant role that they did not possess a daily paper of their own, and even their weekly periodicals were published irregularly. In whole sections of the territory conquered by the Nationalist armies of Chiang Kai-shek, the Communist party and the trade unions continued to remain illegal.

The party did not become the leader in arousing and preparing the masses against the bourgeoisie. Instead, it was the instrument of the bourgeoisie restraining the workers from striking against their Bourgeois "allies" and preventing the peasants from rising to take the land and drive out the rich peasants. Rendered impotent in the revolutionary situation, Stalin nevertheless left the Chinese party sufficient strength for it to hand over to the bourgeoisie the proletarian and peasant masses it should have led against Chiang Kai-shek.

What conception did the Opposition defend? It took as its point of departure the fact that the semicolonial position of China made the struggle against foreign imperialism an immediate task of the democratic revolution. But, it pointed out, it is precisely this position that makes inevitable the coming agreement between the national bourgeoisie — seeking customs autonomy — and the imperialists, both of them bound together by a common fear of the Chinese masses.

The democratic revolution sets the task not only of liberation from the imperialist yoke but also the solution of the agrarian question. In China, however, the country usurer and landowner is so intimately bound up with the urban big bourgeoisie, the compradors, and in the last analysis, the foreign bourgeoisie, that the agrarian revolution can only be carried out in violent struggle against all these elements. Will the bourgeoisie or even the petty bourgeoisie lead the masses to a solution of this problem? Quite the contrary. Only the proletariat of China can lead the peasantry in the struggle for liberation and

the establishment of their own power. In the struggle, it is necessary to establish a bloc which is led by the proletariat whose vanguard is organized into a separate Communist party, subordinated to no other party and acting independently.

What guarantees must the proletariat and the Communists establish for the victory of the revolution? Primarily, to rely upon themselves, upon their own apparatus, and in the end, upon their own state machinery. The Canton government is not our government just as the Nationalist armies are not our armies and the Kuo Min Tang is not our party. They are the armies and party of the bourgeoisie. The same holds true of the Wuhan government established by the "Lefts" after Chiang Kai-shek's coup d'etat in Shanghai.

Everywhere, therefore, the workers and peasants must form Soviets, for which they are already fighting instinctively.

For advancing this course of action, the whole apparatus of the Russian party and the International was converted into a machine to crush the Left Opposition. From Stalin and Martynov down to the last functionary, an international campaign was conducted to prove that Chiang Kai-shek was a reliable ally. After he had massacred the Shanghai proletariat, his place of honor in the campaign was taken by Feng Yu-hsiang and Wang Chin Wei. The whole Communist press lauded the bourgeois generals as "our own." The Kuo Min Tang, which the Russian Political Bureau had decided (against Trotsky's solitary vote) to admit into the Communist International as a "sympathizing" party, was presented to the world as only one step removed from Communism. To such lengths had Stalinism gone in the International that when Chiang Kai-shek's forces entered Shanghai to consecrate in proletarian blood the victory of the counter-revolution, the French Communist party sent him a telegram of congratulations on the formation of the "Shanghai Commune"!

The proposals of the Opposition for an independent Communist party in China were unsparingly attacked. This would mean, cried Stalin and Bucharin, to leave the Kuo Min Tang, to "desert our allies," to drive away the bourgeoisie from the "united front," to "skip over stages." The bourgeoisie had to be supported, they contended, and the bloc maintained. It is true that in the "bloc" it was the bourgeoisie who ruled and the proletariat who served, but this fatal "detail" was overlooked completely in the interests of the "national revolution."

Even after the second Chiang Kai-shek coup, Stalin doggedly maintained his course. Only, in place of the "Kuo Min Tang center" of Chiang Kai-shek which was supposed to be leading the "anti-imperialist revolution," was now put the "Kuo Min Tang Left" of Wang Chin Wei, which was supposed to be leading the "agrarian revolution." After Chiang Kai-shek had led his troops to Shanghai in order there to join forces with the foreign imperialists against the Chinese masses, the government of the "Left" bourgeoisie was set up in Wuhan.

The ghastly experiment in Menshevism was now continued on a "higher scale." Stalin called the Wuhan government of bourgeois politicians the "revolutionary center" of the South. According to Stalin, the Wuhan clique was becoming the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry." And if this was the case, the proposal of the Opposition to form Soviets in the Wuhan territory was, you see, a criminal adventure. For if we already have the "democratic dictatorship" set up, what purpose is there in organizing Soviets, which are organs of power and must consequently be aimed at overwhelming the existing regime? This is how the Stalinists argued.

Into the Wuhan government were sent two Communist ministers, one as the minister of labor and the other, Tang Ping Shan, who had already distinguished himself in Moscow and China in the struggle against "Trotskyism" because it underestimated the peasantry, as minister of agriculture. How did this bourgeois government, the "organ of the agrarian revolution," proceed to act? In the customary manner of all bourgeois governments that exist only by grace of the ignorance, disorganization and weakness of the revolutionary masses. It sought to crush the workers' and peasants' movement, and in this task it found the signal support of the two Communist captives who served the Chinese bourgeoisie as ministers under instructions from Moscow. Wuhan proceeded to "organize the agrarian revolution" by sending the Communist minister and anti-Trotsky expert into the countryside at the head of an armed division for the purpose of suppressing the insurrectionary peasants! In this one episode is illumined the whole counter-revolutionary course which Stalinism pursued in the Chinese revolution. The Communist vanguard was transformed by Stalin into the club with which the bourgeoisie smashed the masses into submission.

At the very moment when he was sharpening the knife for the neck of the Shanghai proletariat, Chiang Kai-shek was being lauded in Moscow by Stalin, who proclaimed him a loyal ally, and condemned the Opposition

for proposing measures against him. Stalin suffered the same inevitable disappointment with the Wuhan government. It followed with almost staged accuracy in the footsteps of Chiang Kai-shek. The "Left Kuo Min Tang" leaders proved to be not one whit more revolutionary than their Right wing brothers-under-the-skin. The fantastic "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry," which Lenin had kicked into the dustbin of history in April 1917, proved to be, a decade later in China, a noose around the necks of the proletariat and peasantry.

With his "workers' and peasants' party," with his "anti-imperialist united front," with his "bloc of four classes," with his "revolutionary parliament of the Kuo Min Tang," with his "democratic dictatorship" and opposition to the formation of Soviets under proletarian leadership—with all this Stalin played the reactionary part in China which Tseretelli and Chernov sought unsuccessfully to fill in the Russian revolution of 1917. At every stage in the struggle, the Opposition defended the tested doctrines of Marxism. The Centrist apparatus crushed the Left Opposition. But in doing so it only crushed the Chinese revolution.

Planned Economy: Industrialization and Collectivization of Agriculture

While conducting its fight against the ravages of Stalinism on the international field, the Opposition was simultaneously engaged in a sharp struggle against the policies of the bureaucracy at home. The Communist worker whose head has been systematically pumped full of lies and who has been taught a history of the past ten years which never took place, frequently answers the criticisms of the Oppositionist with a general reference to the undoubted successes of the Five Year Plan. In nine cases out of ten, however, he is not aware of the fact that it took years of struggle (1923-28) by the Left Opposition merely to have a Five Year Plan adopted by the party leadership.

The introduction of plan into Soviet economy can be traced as far back as July 1920. The whole railroad system was a wreck. The party put Trotsky in charge of restoring transportation and on the date mentioned the famous "Order No. 1042" was issued as the first of a series of systematic measures which finally brought order and regularity where chaos and collapse had prevailed before. Lenin spoke of it as an example of what had to be done in the other branches of industry. The report made by Trotsky to the Eighth Congress of the Soviets based on the experience, and the theses he prepared together with Emshanov, were warmly defended by Lenin against the "skeptics who say: 'What good is it to make forecasts for many years ahead?'"

The question of long-term planned economy was raised more sharply in 1923 by Comrade Trotsky. Unaided this time by Lenin, who had already been compelled to withdraw from the party councils, Trotsky laid before the party his arguments for the elaboration of plan in economy in order to carry out successfully an industrialization of the country and a collectivization of its backward, scattered, individualistic agriculture. The critics of the Opposition, be it said in passing, never stopped to explain the contradiction (created by themselves) between their two claims: first, that Trotsky was opposed to building socialism in Russia, and secondly, that he was too extreme in his proposals for industrializing the country and particularly its agriculture.

From 1923 on, the Opposition pointed out that the only material foundation for socialism is large machine industry capable of reorganizing agriculture as well. Russia's backwardness made the speedy development of such an industry especially imperative in view of the retarda-

tion of the international revolution. In addition, the Left wing showed, the vast mass of the peasantry was undergoing a process of differentiation in which the rich peasant (the Kulak) was growing stronger and making dangerous advances which only the organization of the poor peasants and their systematic introduction to collective farming would be able to impede. The Opposition demanded an industrial progress that would be able to dominate and reorganize agriculture, satisfy the needs of the peasantry on a cheap basis, and provide the economic basis for abolishing the petty bourgeois strata of the village population.

How did the bureaucracy reply? These "practical people," who would not allow themselves to be taken in by "fantastic ideas" about planning for years in advance, launched a furious assault upon Trotsky. Rykov hastened to report to the Fifth Congress of the Comintern that Trotsky's proposals were a petty-bourgeois deviation from Leninism, that the Russian party leadership was doing all it could do and all that could be expected of it in the field of industry and agriculture. Stalin sneeringly replied to the Opposition's arguments with the comment that it wasn't a plan that the peasant needed, but a good rain for his crops! The danger of the rising Kulak was derided.

But the Kulak was growing in strength and becoming the dominant figure in the countryside. Moreover, he was permeating the party—a whole section of it—with his ideology. The first two years of struggle of the Opposition finally bore fruit in the revolt of the revolutionary Leningrad proletariat in 1925, which compelled its leaders—men like Zinoviev who had fathered the campaign against "Trotskyism"—to combine in a bloc with the 1923 Opposition. The alarm felt by the Leningrad proletarians at the inroads being made by the Kulak and his urban associate, the Nepman, was not, however, shared by the crust-hardened bureaucracy. Instead of adopting the proposals for a systematic industrialization of the country, the Stalin-Bucharin leadership steered a course towards that same Kulak whom, later on, when they took fright at his growth, they sought to "liquidate" by decree at one blow.

To the already well-to-do peasants Bucharin cried out the advice: Enrich yourselves! Kalinin made speeches denouncing the poor peasants as lazy good-for-nothings because they did not accumulate, and praising the diligence and industry of the "economically powerful peasant," that is, of the Kulak. Pravda (in April 1925) urged that the "economic possibilities of the well-to-do peasant,

the economic possibilities of the Kulaks, must be unfettered." The Commissariat for Agriculture of the Georgian Soviets, in harmony with the prevailing atmosphere in the ruling strata of the party, elaborated a project for the denationalization of the land. In 1926, the Kulak course of Stalinism was pushed so far that for a time the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets granted the vote to exploiting peasants. In all this period, the belated present-day upholders of the Five Year Plan "as against Trotsky," not only had industrialization and collectivization furthest from their minds, were not only its staunchest opponents, but actually steered a directly opposite course.

In 1925, that is, even before the 1927 platform of the Opposition bloc, Trotsky once more wrote in detail about the tremendous possibilities which the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of a proletarian dictatorship offered for the progress of socialism, even on the basis of an isolated workers' state. In "Whither Russia?" he advanced the idea that even with an independent reproduction based on socialist accumulation, the Soviet republic could show a speed of industrial progress unknown and impossible under capitalism. His prediction of a possible 20 percent annual growth (six years later this was proved to be an entirely moderate figure, entirely attainable), was the subject for great merriment among the functionaries assembled at one of the party congresses, caused by the "ironical" ridicule which Stalin showered upon the prediction. The official position was expressed by Bucharin when he put forward the perspective that Russia would build socialism "with the speed of a tortoise," at a snail's pace!

The 1927 platform of the Opposition was the most elaborate and definite proposal it had presented to the party, and this was undoubtedly one of the reasons why it was so rabidly attacked. It was officially suppressed by the bureaucracy, which refused to print it. Its circulation in mimeographed form was made a crime punishable by imprisonment or exile. There are Bolsheviks in Siberia today for having distributed the ideas which Stalin was himself compelled to adopt in large measure two years later. In the Platform, the Opposition demanded a categorical condemnation of the first Five Year Plan elaborated by Rykov and Krzhizhanovsky, and adopted by the party leaders. This timid, worthless plan proposed an annual growth of 9 percent for the first year and a decreasing percentage every year thereafter until it would reach a 4 percent growth at the end of the plan.

The bolder proposals submitted by the Opposition, which later were proved to be infinitely more realistic and applicable, met with just as strong a condemnation from the Stalinists. On all sides the Opposition spokesmen were taunted by the bureaucrats with the question: Where will you get the means?—although the expenditures for industrial development proposed at first by the Opposition were greatly exceeded when the current Plan finally got under way. And when the Opposition presented its proposals for raising the means by a forced loan from the Kulaks, by a lowering of prices based on cutting overhead and the bureaucratic apparatus, by a skillful utilization of the foreign trade monopoly, etc., the bureaucrats raised a hue and cry against the "counter-revolutionary Trotskyists."

In the days of the French revolution the reaction sought to overthrow the rule of the city artisans and revolutionary petty bourgeoisie by inciting the peasants against them, by arousing every one of the backward, reactionary prejudices of the French peasants against the "predatory capital." Such a cry is the distinguishing feature of reaction. And true to themselves, the bureaucracy which had come to the top on the basis of the post-1923 reaction, made use of the same methods. Stalin, Rykov and Kuybischev signed a manifesto to the whole Russian people announcing that the Opposition proposed "to rob the peasantry." The lesser bureaucrats carried on an even more reactionary propaganda in the villages against the Left wing. In the cities, in the meantime, the disturbed proletarians were assured by Stalin and Bucharin that there was no danger whatsoever from the Kulaks, that there were some, it is true, but not enough to worry about. The professional statisticians were put to the job of presenting tables to prove the "insignificant percentage" of the Kulaks. The need for collectivization was minimized to the vanishing point. As late as 1928, the principal agrarian "specialist" of the apparatus, Yakovlev, the commissar for agriculture, declared against the Opposition that collective farming would for years to come "remain little islets in the sea of private peasant farms." At the Fifteenth party Congress, where the Opposition leaders were all expelled, Rykov hectored the Opposition with the question: If the Kulak is so strong why hasn't he played us some trick or other? As will be seen further on, Rykov did not have long to wait.

Finally, only a few months were required in the application of the original Five Year Plan of Rykov-Stalin in order to demonstrate how well-founded had been the Opposition's criticism of its inadequacy. The apparatus was compelled to revise it virtually from stem to stern.

Without the persistent years of struggle of the Left Opposition, it is entirely doubtful that even those measures of progress which have been made thus far would have been accomplished. Left to themselves, unhampered by the demands of the Opposition, there is every reason to believe that the Stalin-Bucharin bloc would have continued to go further into that reactionary, nationalist swamp where the Kulak and the other classes hostile to the October Revolution were steadily pulling it.

The essential, positive features of the Five Year Plan, the phenomenal success which a proletariat in power has been able to show in the realm of industrial progress—these are a debt which is owed exclusively to the unremitting struggle of the Opposition. That is how the records of history will register it.

The Break-up of the Bloc Between the Right Wing and the Center and the Launching of the 'Third Period'

The struggle conducted on an international scale against the Left Opposition was led jointly by the Centrist faction and the Right wing. In their endeavors to beat down the Marxian wing of the International no distinctions could be perceived between Brandler and Thaelmann, Jilek and

Gottwald, Sellier and Thorez, Lovestone and Foster, Kilboom and Silen. This unity was symbolized by the combination of Stalin and Bucharin who established themselves as the "incorruptible Leninist Old Guard."

It was no mere fictitious unity. On all questions of international and domestic policy, of principle and tactics, these two sections of the ruling bloc held a common view. They went hand in hand against "Trotskyism," and hand in hand with Purcell and Chiang Kai-shek. Together they defended the theory of socialism in one country, of "two-class workers and peasants parties." They jointly introduced to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, the revisionist program adopted by the delegates.

But at the end of 1927, the ebb-tide of reaction which had brought the regime into power was giving way to a Leftward turn in the ranks of the international proletariat. In Russia itself, the "bloodless Kulak uprising" of 1928 had a sobering effect upon the workers and they began to press upon the leadership for a turn of the helm to the Left. It was in this atmosphere that Stalin was compelled to steer in the opposite direction from the one he had been sailing for five years. Starting cautiously with an attack upon obscure representatives of the Right wing, he succeeded so quickly in stripping the latter of its support that he was able in 1929-1930 to make a frontal attack upon its real leadership: Rykov, Bucharin and Tomsky.

To a Communist public dumbfounded by the unexpectedness of the attack, the three leaders of the Right wing were presented by Stalin as the banner-bearers of the capitalist restoration. The president of the Communist International, the head of the Soviet government, and the leader of the Soviet trade unions were depicted by Stalin as the agents of the Thermidorian counter-revolution! But it is precisely this "trio" with whom Stalin had for five-six years been in the most intimate "indissoluble" alliance against the Left wing of the party.

If Stalin's indictment of the Right wing had any meaning at all—and it did—it was, at the same time, a murderous arraignment of the Centrist faction itself. For what pretense could it make to Bolshevism when it had admittedly been in indistinguishable solidarity for half a decade with restorationists? Where in all history could an instance be found of the genuine revolutionary tendency having been in an inseparable bloc with another tendency which, within virtually twenty-four hours, proved to be the champion of black reaction?

Given the fact that both sections of the leadership had a common-principle basis, given the fact that to cut off

the Right wing Stalin had to borrow copiously from the ideological arsenal of the Left Opposition (the Right wing did not hesitate to accuse him of "Trotskyism" just as Trotsky foretold in 1926!), Stalin's campaign against the Right wing served at the same time as a deadly self-revelation of Centrism, and an involuntary tribute to the justice of the whole Opposition struggle.

Let it not be forgotten that the whole Fifteenth Russian party Congress condemned the Oppositionists as panic-mongers for warning against the growing Kulak danger. Just as Rykov had taunted the Opposition with the question: If the Kulak is so dangerous why hasn't he played us some trick?—so Molotov cried impatiently in December 1927 that the Kulak was nothing new, that there was no need of alarm or of special measures beyond those already in force. Everybody "agrees," argued Molotov, who insistently minimized the magnitude of the exploiting farmers, "it exists, and there is no need to speak about it."

Only a few brief weeks later the whole Soviet Union was violently shaken by a demonstration of the tremendous power which the Kulak had amassed all the while that Bucharin-Stalin-Molotov-Rykov had been covering him up from Trotsky's criticisms. In January 1928, right after the congress and emboldened by their success in having the Left wing cut off from the party, the Kulaks rose in what came to be known as their "bloodless uprising." Powerful and confident, they refused to turn over their hoarded stocks of grain and, in effect, declared: Unless the Soviet power yields to our demands for prices above those fixed by the proletarian state we shall keep our stores and starve the cities, the working-class centers, into submission!

So effective and alarming was their resistance that for the first time in many long years, the Soviets were compelled to requisition the villages' grain by armed force. All the official philosophy of "Enrich yourselves!" the vicious self-consolation about the insignificance of the Kulak, the rabid hounding of the Opposition for its timely warnings, were now whipped to tatters by the realities. The revolutionary spirit of a now alarmed working class, which had by no means been entirely eliminated by the campaign against the Opposition, forced its way into the open in spite of the obstacles put in its path by the bureaucratic regime. It is this pressure from below which gave the real impulsion to the break-up of the hitherto solid Right-Center bloc. This still unclear revolt against the previous line of yielding to the capitalist elements

inside and outside the country, jerked the helm out of the hands of the Right and forced a change in the course.

On the basis of this Leftward current in the masses, the Stalinist faction opened up a new phase of its development, the "third period" of its blunders on a Soviet and an international scale. This flight of the frightened bureaucrats from yesterday's rank opportunism to adventurism is embraced in what has become known as the "third period."

The arbitrarily defined period does not commence in the Comintern's history with its proclamation at the Sixth Congress, but even more definitely at the Ninth Plenum of the C. I. early in 1928. At that time the first signs of a working-class resurgence in Europe could be detected, but only the first signs. The vote cast for the Communist parties, particularly in Germany, was increasing, but with it, also, the vote cast for the social democracy. In a number of other countries, however, the working class was either writhing in the pain of a still unsurmounted defeat, as in China, or else passive under the soporific effects of a temporary economic boom, as in France and the United States.

The Ninth Plenum, instead of establishing the precise stage of development of the international labor movement, proclaimed the rise of a "new and higher" stage of the Chinese revolution (not counter-revolution, but revolution!), gave its blanket endorsement to guerrilla adventurism, and announced from the mouth of Thaelmann and the other spokesmen of the Comintern that the working masses throughout the world were becoming "more and more radicalized." The warnings against this light-minded conception of an automatic, horizontal progress of the revolutionary movement were of no avail, for they were uttered by the Opposition. Trotsky's clear-sighted analysis of the real status of the movement was not only passed over in silence at the Sixth Congress to which it was presented, but it was not even given to the assembled delegates.

The Sixth Congress in the middle of 1928 carried the Ninth Plenum a few steps further in absurdity. Formally, it marked the culminating point of the collaboration between Centrism and the Right wing (Stalin and Bucharin). Actually, it incorporated into the foundation of the next period a mixture of opportunist premises and ultra-Left deductions which have been at the root of all the confusion and defeats suffered by Communism since that time.

The Sixth Congress had many points of similarity with the Fifth, which was held in 1924 after the defeat in Ger-

many. In 1924, no defeat was acknowledged; on the contrary, the revolution was proclaimed to be right ahead. In 1928, the same error was made with regard to the Chinese revolution. In the period of the Fifth Congress, Stalin made the novel discovery that the "social democracy was the most moderate wing of Fascism." In 1928, the Sixth Congress laid the basis for the unique philosophy of "social-Fascism." The Fifth Congress celebrated the victory of "Bolshevization" and "monolithism," at a time when the very basis under the various "Bolshevik leaderships" imposed upon the national sections was being undermined. In 1928, the most violent internal struggles were being fought behind the scenes of the "unified Communist International." The Fifth Congress, with all its ultra-Leftist palaver, contained not merely the germs of a brief spurt to the Left but also a protracted swing to the Right, to the period of the Anglo-Russian Committee, of the Chiang Kai-shek alliance, the Anti-Imperialist League and the "Peasants' International." The Sixth Congress, for all its endorsement of adventurist conclusions, consecrated the revisionist theory of socialism in one country and established the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (that is, the Kerenskiad or the Kuo Min Tang tragedy) as an iron law governing the destinies of the revolution on three-quarters of the earth.

The struggle against the "Right danger" launched at the Sixth Congress, which Bucharin had resisted only as recently as the Fifteenth Congress of the Russian party, was platonic and anonymous. Its value may be estimated from the fact that it was proclaimed from the Congress tribune by the international leader of the Right wing, Bucharin. In this manner, the formal unification of the ruling bloc was preserved and used to cover up the bitter internal dispute.

It is instructive to observe that at the very time that Stalin was busily engaged in sapping the ground under Bucharin and Co., going so far as to organize an unofficial congress of his own, simultaneously with "Bucharin's Congress," he nevertheless took the leadership in condemning any rumors about disagreements in the Russian party leadership as "Trotskyist slanders." In a special report on the subject made by Stalin himself to the Council of Elders at the Congress, he repudiated all rumors regarding differences in the Russian Political Bureau. He emphatically denied that there were any Right wingers or Right wing views in the Political Bureau or even the Central Committee, and, to confirm his assertions, intro-

duced a resolution, signed by himself and every other member of the Political Bureau which declared:

"The undersigned members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union declare before the Council of Elders of the Congress that they most emphatically protest against the circulation of rumors that there are dissensions among the members of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the C. P. S. U."

Needless to say, the assembled marionettes listened solemnly and approvingly to this criminally ludicrous deception of the Communist International, concocted jointly by Stalin and Bucharin.

The dissolution of this state of affairs was not long delayed. In almost less time than it takes to tell it, virtually all the leading spokesmen of the Sixth Congress were either crushed organizationally, expelled outright, or saved from expulsion by humiliating capitulation. Just as the leaders of the Fifth Congress lasted but a brief moment in the seats of power, so did the Sixth Congress "Bolsheviks" meet with a speedy end. Bucharin, the political leader of the Congress, the reporter on the program, the president of the Comintern, was denounced a few months later as the leader of the capitalist-restorationist tendency in the Soviet Union (no less!). Lovestone, Gitlow and Wolfe were unceremoniously expelled as agents of the American bourgeoisie. Roy, who had made a livelihood denouncing Trotsky as an agent of Chamberlain, found himself designated in exactly the same manner. Jilek and Co. in Czechoslovakia, Kilboom in Sweden, Brandler (and almost Ewert) in Germany, Sellier and Co. in France, and a host of others, were expelled or withdrew from the Comintern.

The removal of any Right wing restraint made possible the climb to the heights of absurdity at the Tenth Plenum in 1929, to the very peaks of the "third period." The Tenth Plenum was the *reductio ad absurdum* of the Sixth Congress with a number of novelties added by Stalin and Molotov on their own account. It was the Plenum par excellence of the "third period," the same "third period" which was at first denounced as an opportunistic idea by the Thaelmann-Neumann delegation to the Sixth Congress.

The "third period," its proponents explained, was characterized by a constantly increasing radicalization of the masses, simultaneously in every country. There can be no fourth period, announced Molotov, for the third period ends with revolution. The present "heightened po-

litical sensitivity of the broad masses," added Losovsky, "is a characteristic sign of the eve of a revolution." Moireva, a member of the E. C. C. I. [Executive Committee of the Communist International], declared: "It is my opinion from the May events as well as from the recent Polish events that there were a series of elements in them that recall our July days. The fact alone that the Communist parties had to restrain the most advanced sections of the working class in their surge forward, speaks for a rapidly approaching revolutionary situation." This extravaganza is illuminated only if it is remembered that "our July days" were the direct precursor of the October insurrection in Russia. It should be borne in mind that all these fantasies were presented to the official Communist world as unshakable articles of faith more than three years ago!

From this "third period" with its incessantly rising radicalization of the masses in virtually every country in the world, in which France was solemnly announced to be at the head of the revolutionary list (in 1929!), flowed the theory of social Fascism, a disease of senile decay from which the Comintern is suffering to this day. With Stalin's ingenious formula of 1924 in mind, Manuilsky now announced that "the fusion of the social democracy with the capitalist state is not merely a fusion at the top. This fusion has taken place from top to bottom, all along the line." Improving on Lenin, Manuilsky announced that Noske back in 1918 was already a social Fascist.

The master strategist, Bela Kun, who destroyed the Hungarian revolution by failing to understand the nature of the social democracy in 1918, now tried some ten years later to repair the damage by advancing an even worse interpretation: "Social-Fascism is the type of Fascist development in those countries in which capitalist development is more advanced than in Italy. . . . In this stage of development, social reformism dies out: it is transformed partly into social demagogic elements and partly into the element of mass violence of Fascism." From this Manuilsky drew the conclusion concerning the united front policy that "we have never considered it as a formula for everybody, for all times and people. . . . Today we are stronger and proceed to more aggressive methods in the struggle for the majority of the working class." What the lesser functionaries had to contribute to the question may easily be imagined from these few quotations.

The official motivation for the establishment of the "third period" and all its commandments was false from be-

ginning to end. But this does not mean that there was not a profound reason for the 180 degrees turn in the course of the Comintern. Centrism, bereft of any anchor in principles, possessing no platform distinctly its own, was driven to the Left by the pressure of events and criticism. Having no real foundation, it must base itself upon an artificially preserved prestige. In order to maintain the continuity of its prestige, that is, in order to explain away the head-over-heels turn to the Left, or more precisely, in order to justify the change without in any way leaving room for criticism of its preceding course, the "third period" was called into existence.

By its proclamation the Centrists were able to justify the "united front from the top" with Chiang Kai-shek and Purcell as well as no united front at all. Both were justified by one brilliant theory: the arbitrary establishment of "periods." In the "second period," according to this convenient dogma, it was the essence of Bolshevism to maintain a united front with proved strikebreakers in return for their "struggle to defend the Soviet Union" from British imperialism. In the "third period," however, all social democrats from Purcell down to the socialist worker in the shop had become Fascist and the Communist must therefore have nothing to do with them. The "third period" formulae were the philosophy by which Centrism linked together the two mutually supplementary periods of its blunders, crimes, and ideological disorder without prejudice to itself: at least, that was the intention of its artificers.

The "third period" was, and to the extent that the remnants of it still clutter the road it still is, a milestone of Centrism's road of bankruptcy and decay. The more than three years since its proclamation have witnessed a new series of defeats added to those accumulated between 1923 and 1928.

It is in this period that the rise of Fascism in Germany could proceed without encountering any effective resistance by the Communists, who were prohibited by the dogma of "social Fascism" from making a united front with the social democratic workers. Disoriented by the fantastic prediction of Molotov that France stood at the head of the list for revolutionary struggle, the Comintern was taken totally unawares by the upheaval in Spain. When it was finally shaken out of its stupor, the Spanish Communist party was rendered impotent by the extreme sectarianism of its policy, by its rejection of the tactic of the united front.

In the United States the unparalleled opportunities for revolutionary work afforded by the convulsions of the crisis were lost, one after the other, by the application of tactics which repelled hundreds of thousands of workers moving in the direction of Communism. In England, France, Czechoslovakia—in a word, in every important country, the theory and practice of the "third period" brought the Communist movement to its knees, introduced confusion into its mind, paralyzed its limbs and isolated it from the masses. If the international social democracy is still a big power to be reckoned with today, if it still retains its sway over millions of workers, it has the blunders of Stalinism to thank for it.

The passionate desire of the masses for a united front to resist the encroachments of the bourgeoisie was repulsed by the bureaucratic demand of the Communist parties for a "united front from below" or a "Red united front," that is, a united front dependent upon the acceptance in advance by non-Communist workers of Communist leadership. The hatred of Fascism manifested by socialist workers, as well as Communists, was never utilized by the Stalinists. Instead, they repelled the socialist workers by their empty chatter about "social Fascism" and their alliance—in Germany, at any rate—with the Hitler bands in the notorious "Red" Referendum in Prussia. The resistance which the socialist workers were eager to offer to the capitalist attacks, was further weakened by the sectarian policy of splitting the unions and forming tiny Communist trade union sects.

The Comintern's isolation from the masses on the political field as well as in the trade unions, which the Opposition forecast in time, has proceeded hand in hand with an unprecedented ideological and moral degeneration in the ranks of official Communism. This could not be expected to continue over a long period without ending in a terrific crash, be it inside the Soviet Union or outside of it.

The accumulated effects of this degeneration within the Soviet Union have brought in their train the dangers of Thermidor and Bonapartism, just as they threaten the whole Communist International with discreditment and dissolution.

The Dangers of Thermidor and Bonapartism

The Great French Revolution of the eighteenth century is rich with instructive lessons for the working class today. Only a priest will declare that there is any absolute guarantee against the fall of the Russian revolution. The revolutionist will stand on guard against it; his vigilance will be keener if he understands the nature of the dangers that threaten and what measures must be taken to ward them off.

The French revolution experienced two periods of defeat: Thermidorian reaction and the Bonapartist dictatorship. On the Ninth of Thermidor (July 27, 1794) the revolutionary Jacobins, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Couthon, Lebas—"the Bolsheviks of the French revolution"—were overthrown by a combination of the Right wing Jacobins, the vacillators and the royalist reaction. The guillotine which sent 21 Jacobin intransigeants to death the next day bit no longer into the reaction. In its turn, the Thermidorian epoch was climaxed a few years later with the ascension to power of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The Thermidorian reaction was made possible by a degeneration and corruption of the revolutionary party of that time—the Jacobin clubs. It was facilitated by a yearning for "peace and tranquility" of certain sections of the people and above all by the politicians' wearying of the revolutionary struggle and moving off to the Right. It gained momentum from the pressure of royalists and reactionaries who adapted themselves to the revolutionary customs and speech of the times in order to save their own hides. The weak-kneed and weak-minded among the revolutionists yielded to the social pressure of the reactionary class.

The Thermidorian overthrow was not the open counter-revolution. On the contrary, it took place under the old banner and with the old watchwords scarcely altered. The Left wing Jacobins were denounced by the Thermidorians as "agents of Pitt" (just as Oppositionists in Russia were denounced as "agents of Chamberlain"). They were charged with being merely a "few isolated individuals," "malevolent aristocrats" who were undermining the united fatherland. The Right wing Jacobins, who were unwittingly blazing the trail for the starkly counter-revolutionary Bonapartist

dictatorship, calumniated the men they executed, imprisoned and banished, as "counter-revolutionists."

The Bolshevik party today is not the party which took power in October 1917. It has gone through a period of social and political reaction. Its doctrine has been sapped at the foundation, distorted and corroded. It has swollen into a vast, shapeless mass by having hundreds of thousands of indiscriminately commanded workers and peasants poured into its ranks until it has lost that distinctness and independence essential to a revolutionary party. It has been deprived of its principal functions by a usurpatory, bureaucratic apparatus which raised itself above it and replaced it. Its revolutionary wing has been violently torn from it by the Thermidorian expulsions of the Left Opposition.

The systematic crushing of the leading party of the proletariat, without which the dictatorship cannot be exercised in a revolutionary sense, not only accentuates the danger of Thermidor in the Soviet Union but, at a given point, also the threat of Bonapartism. On the road of degeneration which leads to the counter-revolutionary triumph, Thermidor and Bonapartism do not present stages differing in their class foundation. In the Great French revolution, Bonapartism swiftly succeeded the Ninth of Thermidor and the Directory. But this succession is as little ordained and inevitable as is the certainty of counter-revolution altogether; a fusion of the two stages, a modification of one or the other under the conditions of a new social epoch — these and many other possibilities are quite conceivable. The Right wing in the Russian party had its strength essentially in the classes and not in the ranks, more specifically, not in the apparatus of the party. The Right wing was so easily crushed on a party scale because it was not prepared to make an open appeal for support to the class interests it represented: the Kulak, and the Nepman dependent upon him. The victory by the Stalinist center over the Right wing triumvirate halted, for the time being, the advance of the Thermidorian forces, of those dark and backward agrarian interests which had been whipped up and nurtured in the reactionary years of struggle against the Left Opposition. Only, this victory did not result in eliminating the other, and more acute, phases of the counter-revolutionary danger.

While both the Right and the Left wings of the party in the Soviet Union represent well-defined class forces and interests, the same cannot be said of the Centrist apparatus. Classic petty-bourgeois force, the graph of

its policy reveals a broken line of leaps to the Left and to the Right which become shorter and more frequent with the aggravation of the crisis. It leans now upon the proletarian core of the country, as during the campaign against the Right wing, now upon the reactionary forces, as during the fight against the Left. It cannot find for itself a firm class foundation from which to operate; the closest it came to such a base was during the period of the idealization by the Stalin faction of the "middle peasant," a shifty social stratum which, far from serving as a solid class foundation, required one itself.

The Stalin faction, however, has its strength in the party bureaucracy: it is the party bureaucracy. In the process of watering down the party until it is a bloated, shapeless mass, the apparatus has, at the same time, raised itself above the party to an unapproachable level and constituted itself a bureaucratic caste. The diffused party mass is unable to reach this caste in order to change it, or to have it reflect the interests of the mass itself. The apparatus, on the other hand, after having strangled the party, must stifle all life within itself. We say "must" because it cannot refer any disputes in its ranks to the party mass below for fear of unleashing a force that is inherently inimical to it. The whole bureaucratic system, consequently, moves inexorably toward a condition in which a decreasing number of individuals decide and speak for all; the number of these individuals today, to all practical purposes, is one, and his name is Stalin.

Devoid of a class basis, the apparatus is permeated principally with the desire for self-preservation and self-perpetuation. Its policies, in all their zig-zags, are subordinated essentially to this aim. The sickening Byzantine flattery of Stalin which is compulsory for every official, the conversion of the army and particularly of the G. P. U. into an instrument with which the Secretariat operates ever more exclusively—combined with the suppression of workers' democracy in general, and party democracy in particular, that is, of the principal guarantees against a degeneration of the proletarian dictatorship—these are the signs of the present period in the Soviet Union. They disclose "the preconditions of the Bonapartist regime in the country."

Tacking desperately between the various classes and social strata, the apparatus satisfies none of them. In this fact lies the danger that the mounting discontent of all sections of the population, and above all of the peasantry, will explode the very foundations of the Soviet power, that is, of the proletarian dictatorship. If the crisis breaks out into the open and reveals that the proletariat

and its party have been so weakened that they cannot act decisively and victoriously, then the counter-revolution will probably assume the form of Bonapartism, of the iron man or men "standing above the classes" and apparently mediating between the contending forces, resting for the time being upon the strength of the military forces and the experienced cohesion of the bureaucratic apparatus. It is this prospect which reveals the Stalinist faction as the potential reservoir of the Bonapartist danger.

Superficial examination alone permits one to exclude this possibility, as well as the possibility of a Thermidorian overturn, on the ground of the so-called "liquidation of the Kulak." If this were actually the case, the danger would undoubtedly be considered diminished, although even then, not eliminated. But a more careful scrutiny will reveal that the "liquidated Kulak" is still a substantial force, more threatening in this respect, that his present activities and progress are not only concealed behind the administratively established collective farms but are facilitated by the rupture of the relations between town and country, worker and peasant, rendered inevitable by the whole course of the Stalin bureaucracy.

"The French farmers," wrote Marx in his classic study of Bonapartism, "are unable to assert their class interests in their own name, be it by a parliament or by convention. They cannot represent one another, they must themselves be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master, as an authority over them, as an unlimited governmental power, that protects them from above, bestows rain and sunshine upon them. Accordingly, the political influence of the allotment farmer finds its ultimate expression in an executive power that subjugates the commonweal to its own autocratic will."

Such an executive power is present in the bureaucratic apparatus of the party and the Soviets. For it to be fully fledged as a Bonapartist ruling machine, it must first receive baptism in the blood shed by a civil war, that inevitable concomitant to the overthrow of the proletarian dictatorship which the reaction cannot hope to avert. The overthrow itself, however, can be averted, but only by restoring the party of the proletariat, the crushing of which has made possible the accumulation of all the internal contradictions and the maturing of the counter-revolutionary factors. It is to achieve this restoration, to bring closer the day of its attainment, that the strength and activities of the Left Opposition are dedicated.

The International Left Opposition

The International Left Opposition has been constituted in every important country. It stands today formally outside of the official Communist parties, not as a matter of choice but of compulsion. In every case, its ranks are made up chiefly of Communist militants whose defense of the foundations of Leninism brought about their expulsion from the party.

The crisis in the Communist International has divided it into three camps: the Right wing opposition (Brandler, Lovestone, Roy); the bureaucratic Centrist faction of Stalin; and the Left Opposition group of the Bolshevik-Leninists. The fundamental standpoint upon which the first two are united despite other differences, is the reactionary, nationalist theory of socialism in one country. This marks the main dividing line between us and the combined Right wing and Center. The Left Opposition, in opposition to this theory, defends the Marxian conception of the permanent revolution, that is, of the uninterrupted development of the world revolution which, starting in one country, can be maintained only by its extension on an international scale.

The Left Opposition was and remains the irreconcilable opponent of the international social democracy, the principal defender of bourgeois democracy. The Right wing is a bridge from the Communist movement to the social democracy. In the United States, Germany and Czechoslovakia, sections or the whole of the Right opposition have already passed over into the camp of the social democracy. What remains of this faction has no stable basis and no right to a separate existence. It vacillates constantly between social democracy and capitulation to Stalinism, with which it has no fundamental differences. The Centrist faction supports the social democracy from the "Left." By its opportunism, at one stage, and ultra-Leftism at another, it has enabled the social democratic leaders to retain their control over millions of workers.

At every stage of its struggles as a distinctive grouping, the Left Opposition has defended the fundamental principles which its spokesmen and leaders incorporated into the Russian revolution and the Communist International in the early days of their existence. These principles, worked out theoretically by Marx, Engels, Lenin and

Trotsky, and tested through and through by decades of struggles, wars and revolutions, are the primary weapons of the world proletariat in its historic fight to emancipate itself and the whole of humanity. These principles have been undermined, distorted and violated by the ruling regime in the Soviet Union and the Communist International. In doing this, it has led the Communist movement, and consequently the working class, from one defeat to another, until the fatherland of the working class, the Soviet republic, is endangered and the organized revolutionary movement is in the throes of its severest crisis.

The Left Opposition, in its struggle for the regeneration of the Communist movement, is fighting for the present and the future of the whole working class!

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