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DIPLOMACY HIDES WAR PLANS

In the midst of a diplomatic blackout, the toiling masses of the world apprehensively await the final decision of the Great Powers. Under cover of the darkness created by secret diplomacy, a series of horse-deals is now under discussion, deals whose nature will only be fully disclosed when the secret archives are opened in the inevitable revolutions which will end the coming war. But with one voice the robber imperialists proclaim that their diverse "negotiations" are for the purpose of preserving peace.

In Britain, Liberals, Labourites and "Communists" unite with the dissident Tories in clamouring for the Anglo-Soviet pact, which according to them, will guarantee the peace of the world. The official Tories have shown their superior sense of realities in their policy of deliberate obstruction and repeated delays and postponements of negotiations over the projected pact. They intend to conclude the pact only in the last resort, as a final desperate attempt to stay the advance of German imperialism. Far from being a guarantee of world peace, the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Pact will

signify that the world is closer to the universal conflagration than it has ever been since 1919.

Rather than draw so close to the edge of the precipice, the Chamberlain Government has exhausted every expedient in order to divert German attention to the Ukraine as the "living-space" demanded by German imperialism.

But the gold reserves of the Reich have dwindled to a bare 6 per cent. of what they were ten years ago and this is only one of the many reasons why Germany cannot wage a prolonged war. German imperialism is obliged to bank all upon a successful lightning-stroke and the whole of German economy and military preparedness is based on this fact.

Against Russia, with its wide spaces and immense manpower, the swift stroke would prove unavailing, whereas the densely populated cities of the West offer a vulnerable target. Rather than embark upon an exhausting war against Russia, which will culminate at best in mutual collapse and leave the spoils at the mercy of the neutral countries, the Nazis prefer to gamble on a war against the West.

It was in the hope of removing this objection of the Nazis that the offer of a thousand million pounds has been made by British imperialism to Germany. Hudson's offer was a bribe to Germany, an attempt to provide Germany with the means of sustaining the strain of a prolonged war for the conquest of the Ukraine.

The offer was contemptuously rejected by Germany for the quite simple reason that it still leaves Germany at the mercy of the Western powers at the conclusion of the projected war. And the Soviet-German negotiations for a trade pact continue on their subterranean course. German imperialism hopes to neutralise Russia, to gain war-time supplies, and to secure its eastern frontier, while the lightning blow is struck against the West. The German press attacks on Stalin have ceased over a period of some weeks, while Molotov is referred to with increasing cordiality, in spite of the bitterly attacked negotiations for the pact.

In preparation for every eventuality, all sides arm feverishly. It was stated in the House of Commons that more was spent in Britain last year on arms than in the third year of the Great War. The present rate of spending is five million pounds a day, and this figure is matched in most of the European countries. The economists shrug their shoulders and speculate on the extent of the inflation that must overwhelm all the competitors in the near future.

The rival bandits, armed to the teeth, continue to shout their pacific intentions. But gradually they are beginning to sink under the sheer weight of their weapons, just as the prehistoric monsters were overcome in the end by the mere bulk of their tusks and spikes and armoured hides. The national states, like the giant saurians, have outlived themselves and begin to qualify for the pages of the history book.

The threat of universal inflation now hanging over the world is symptomatic of a dying regime. In the years of Roman decline the successive emperors resorted to debasing the currency and antiquarians are able to give the date of a later Roman coin by assaying the metal of which it is made. The early coins were silver, and the content of brass steadily increased until in the period of the crumbling of the Empire they were made of pure brass with a coating of tin.

Modern imperialism passes to its doom accompanied by a similar process. The methods are different, the printing press and the complication of modern financial methods have replaced the primitive practice of debasing the coinage, but the results are the same. The post-war collapse of German economy through inflation was countered by rescue operations

carried out by richer countries through the Young Plan and the Dawes Plan, but the present inflationary epidemic will overwhelm all simultaneously.

The catastrophic drop of new capital issues in Britain last month to more than £20 millions below last year's figures, a drop of more than 75 per cent., reveals the dimensions of the slump which is disguised as an "armaments boom." It is the statistics of new capital issues rather than unemployment returns or interest rates that serves as the most reliable indicator of the industrial cycle. The demand for labour in the arms industry keeps the Labour Exchanges comparatively empty and the demand for money to finance the arms plans keeps the rates of interest high, but behind the false appearance of prosperity lies a real decline of industry mirrored in the fall of new capital issues.

Inflation plus slump means that the conditions that existed in Germany in the post-war period will be witnessed on a world scale in the coming months: rising prices, low wages, unemployment. Only the outbreak of war can cut across this process by imposing even more intolerable burdens on mankind. This is the historical blind alley into which humanity has been led by capitalism.

The present day crisis of capitalism is a permanent one. The point of tension shifts from Tientsin to Danzig and back again. Mr. Chamberlain remained cool and collected in face of the Far Eastern episodes as long as the Danzig situation was tense, but on the first signs of relaxation in Europe, his blood began to boil at the "indignities" inflicted on British subjects several weeks previously. The first signs of British belligerence in the Far East produced a fresh tension in Danzig, and Mr. Chamberlain's blood suddenly cooled down again. And already, before these crises are solved, a new point of tension is arising in the Balkans, another manifestation of the permanently insoluble crisis of capitalism.

There can be no peace under capitalism. The basic rivalry of the imperialist bandits for the world's dwindling trade forces them to conduct their tortuous manoeuvres under cover of secret diplomacy, leading inevitably to war. But already the first gleams of light are beginning to pierce the darkness. The colonial peoples are awakening to renewed struggle, the workers are stirring. War or no war, revolutionary struggles are in preparation. It rests with the conscious vanguard of the workers whether those struggles shall be given the leadership necessary to guide them to victory.

The Irish Revolution has Begun

The preparation for the rigid military dictatorship which will be clamped down on Britain immediately the war starts has proceeded one step further by the passing of the reactionary Prevention of Violence Act by the Chamberlain government.

Proclaimed as a measure aimed at the I.R.A., the Act is an infamous piece of anti-working class legislation aimed directly at the democratic rights of the workers in this country.

The ease with which Chamberlain was able to rush it through the House of Commons however, was not shared by De Valera when he carried out a similar measure in the Treason Act. Twenty-four members of his own party, Fianna Fail, voted against the motion in the Dail, while many branches of his party along with hundreds of Republican and public bodies condemn the Act and demand its withdrawal.

The Irish Labour Party, which remained neutral during the Black and Tan period, now trails behind De Valera and at its conference in May discarded the first plank in its own platform on which James Connolly based the Irish political movement, "The Irish Workers' Republic."

On the other hand the turn of the Communist Party towards the Popular Front finds its greatest contradiction in Ireland. Side by side with the slogan of the "Defence of democracy against foreign aggression" in which they advise the Irish working-class to support Lloyd George, the leader of the Black and Tans, against "Hitler aggression" they utilise the slogans of the British yellow press and condemn the bombings of the I.R.A., not from a socialist point of view but as the acts of "agents of Hitler." In this they reveal themselves as the agents of the British ruling class in Ireland.

For licking the boots of De Valera they have received the toady's reward; they have been completely routed by the new attack against the democratic rights of the working-class which the passing of the Treason Act by De Valera inaugurates.

The defence of democracy is a topic about which Irishmen have ideas of their own, for not a century has passed throughout the 700 years of British economic and political domination of Ireland without an attempt on the part

of the Irish people to free themselves from British rule and establish a democratic Irish republic.

Up till now every attempt has been drowned in the blood of the Irish people after a ruthless campaign by the British Imperialists and the present bombings that have taken place in England have at least drawn the attention of the whole world to the regime of terror that the British capitalists have imposed on Ireland.

In 1914, at the period when British Imperialism was getting ready to grapple with its German rival, Sir Edward Grey was able to "thank God for that bright spot," referring to Ireland, where the British capitalist class saw a source of food, as well as a reservoir of Irish peasants and workers who would be cannon fodder in the coming war. The Easter Rebellion in 1916 rudely awakened them to the fact that Irishmen had no interest in defending the profits of their own oppressors.

The bloody suppression of that revolt and the subsequent murder of its leaders, among whom was James Connolly—the first Irish Marxist—saw a new force enter the field of Irish politics: the Irish working-class.

The post-war revolutionary struggles which shook all Europe reached a peak in the proclamation of the "Irish Republic" in 1919 by Sinn Fein. The smashing of that republic by the Black and Tans and the years of civil war that followed up till 1923 saw the Irish working class pushing further ahead in the struggle for Irish freedom.

With the murder of 77 of the leaders of the Republican and working-class movement and the imprisonment of thousands of rebels, many of whom were shipped to England for internment, the movement entered into a period of decline and stagnation. Thousands of rebels, through starvation and political persecution, left the country and scattered all over the world.

Among the murdered leaders was Liam Mellows whose manifestoes from Mountjoy Prison in 1922 were the first Irish writings to lay down the programme of the Irish Socialist Revolution.

The 1921 Treaty saw the partition of Ireland into the six counties in the North which came under the direct control of British Imperialism

and the twenty-six counties of the South, which constituted the Irish Free State. The Northern counties suffer under a semi-fascist dictatorship, as brutal and reactionary as any of the military and semi-fascist dictatorships to be found on the Continent. In 1935, during the height of the struggle of the workers against the fascists, Craigavon, the director-in-chief of Britain's pogrom gangs, who rules the North, was able to say: "We have all we want here—the Orange Order, the Black Brethren and the B Specials, and they constitute all the Fascism that Ulster wants."

A glance at some of the regulations of the notorious Special Powers Act would show the brutal terror that is exercised in Ulster at the present time. For instance, Regulation No. 23 empowers the authorities "to order the arrest of any suspect without a warrant and his indefinite detention." No. 4 "To prohibit, in advance, any assembly of persons." No. 7a "To blow up bridges," 18c "To examine the bank books of suspects and confiscate money." 21 "To stop and seize any vehicle on the road."

Under this act it is an offence for Gas, Electricity or Water employees to go on strike. Unlimited powers are also given to enter premises without warrants, and to make seizures. All questions from policemen must be answered under penalty. Troops and the notorious B Specials are regularly used against the workers when they come out on strike.

In the Free State conditions are no better. In 1934 De Valera commenced his capitulation to Britain and at the same time he started to attack the I.R.A. "An Phoblacht," the organ of the I.R.A., was suppressed and troops and tanks used against the striking workers.

It was at this period that the I.R.A., standing solidly against British Imperialism, began to take the lead in the struggle of the working-class.

When the Transport Workers came out on strike in 1935 De Valera immediately sent troops to smash their strike. The Army High Command of the I.R.A. issued a statement that it supported the strikers in their demands and that it would defend the workers from the Free State Army. This had tremendous repercussions amongst the working-class and at the Easter and Wolf Tone Commemoration Marches the contingents of the I.R.A. led the whole of the working-class forces.

In the strikes that took place at this time under the leadership of the United Tenants League for a 50 per cent. reduction in rent the I.R.A. took a leading part, and through the militancy of its members won great support among the poor farmers and workers who were on

strike.

From 1935 the leadership has passed into the hands of Sean Russell and the forms of activity have changed. Russell, himself, and other I.R.A. leaders, have been touring the various countries of the world. It is claimed that Russell has raised £200,000 in America and in the meantime the I.R.A. has completely dug itself into all existing Republican organisations, including the Clan-na-Gail and the I.R.D.A.

The tactic of the bomb has certainly created a tremendous interest among Irish workers. While the British Imperialists are straining every nerve to unify their forces in the face of the coming world war, the proclamation of the I.R.A. calls upon all Irishmen to take part in a civil war against Britain and for a united Ireland. That this tactic has been successful up to a point is beyond denial. The increase in the number of branches of all organisations that openly or otherwise support the I.R.A. is proof enough of this, but that in itself is no guarantee that the proclaimed aims of the organisation will be accomplished.

The fact that the I.R.A. makes no appeal to the British workers to take part in their struggle and that it makes no distinction between British capitalist and worker means that they are alienating wide sections of the people whose support they must have before the Irish Revolution can be achieved.

It is true that the British workers have not at any time come to the assistance of the Irish people, but that does not mean that an appeal directed to them on a class basis will not be able to gain their support.

Inside the I.R.A. itself there are two conflicting currents. Not all the collaborators of Liam Mellows have been drawn into support of the bombing tactic. Tom Barry still remains in opposition. The discussion in the latest issues of "An Phoblacht" showed quite clearly the proletarian as distinct from the petty bourgeois point of view.

It is obvious that on the basis of its present platform the I.R.A. will not be able to carry out a genuine struggle for a successful revolution without posing the problem of the fight for the Workers and Peasants Republic and taking up the struggle of Connolly. Sean Russell has recently said: "We are still fighting for De Valera because he is one of us." Meanwhile De Valera continues to play the role of No. 1 B Special of British Imperialism. The arrest of I.R.A. members who have been expelled from England and of Joseph Clarke, editor of "Wolfe Tone Weekly," which has been banned in England for some weeks, will have their reper-

cussions in the crystallisation of a revolutionary working-class wing within the ranks of the I.R.A.

The task of the conscious revolutionary left who clearly understands the class structure of society is to enter the republican organisations and the I.R.A. and to carry out the struggle, educate, explain, and in that manner create the necessary elementary understanding which can, under favourable circumstances, lay the basis

for the Irish Fourth Internationalist Party.

The Irish revolution is under way and only the creation of that party will guarantee its success. The Irish capitalist class or the petty bourgeoisie are incapable of carrying through such a task successfully. The National Revolution must grow into the Socialist Revolution or else fall back into greater reaction. For the Irish people there is no way out except the road of the Irish Workers' and Peasants' Government.

Stalinists Turn Back Refugees

While Nazi Germany continues in its policy of hounding out the Jews by every means in its power, pogroms, beatings, and organised terror, cargo upon cargo of refugees are forced to sail the seas in search for a place to land and live. While all the "democratic" countries keep barred their doors, denouncing the Nazis for their inhuman treatment of the terrified refugees, news came of a cargo boat with 900 men, women and children who arrived at Cuba with landing permits issued to them by Cuban consular officials in Europe. But the Cuban authorities refused to allow them to land and turned them back again to wander the seas.

We publish below an editorial which appeared in the official paper of the Communist Party of "Hoy" (28/5/39) in order to lay bare the true role of the Stalinists whose hearts "bleeds" for the poor Jews in the pages of their press, but who close the doors just as fast as do the capitalist class. It is high time for socialist and anti-fascist public opinion to call to account and ex-

pose these Stalinist hypocrites and double-dealers.

"But we now consider as very just, very Cuban and very patriotic, the tendency of our people to demand the prohibition of excess immigration, because the miserable condition of our country and the great increase of unemployment do not permit the addition of new masses of immigrants. It is most correct that the Cuban should demand not only protection and the right to work on our island, but also the greatest vigilance so that workers, no more than employers from foreign countries, do not penetrate and consume our meagre capacities for production, labour, commerce and employment. For this reason we have supported and now support all possible methods for limiting immigration of any class whatever. Basing ourselves on this premise, we hold that in general the government should close the doors of Cuba against any sort of immigration coming to Cuba.

Congress Socialism

by Ajit Roy

The Congress Socialist Party of India is passing through an internal crisis. The latest event in this crisis is the resignation of M. R. Masani, Joint Secretary of the Party, Asoke Mehta, Rammanohar Lohia and Achut Patwardhana from the Central Committee.

Unwillingness to support the "Forward Bloc"—a bloc of left groupings inside the Indian National Congress initiated by the radical ex-President Subhas Bose—and the domination of the Stalinist Party are among the reasons cited in the statement issued to the press by the four stalwarts of the Congress Socialist Party.

On the question of the formation of left blocs inside the Indian National Congress, the sig-

natories state that "any crystallisation of the left nationalist elements in the Congress into an organisation would be a blow to the national movement, both because it divides the Congress into rigid and mutually exclusive blocs and because the process of radicalisation itself would be retarded," if it is given an organised form. The Congress Socialist Party, according to these gentlemen, should continue its traditional function of seeking to influence and move the Congress as a whole.

The significance of the present crisis inside the Congress Socialist Party can only be understood in the light of the larger crisis in Indian society as a whole and inside the Congress itself.

The present situation in India is characterised by a tremendous upsurge of the peasant movement both in British India and in the Native States. In some parts, particularly in Behar, the movement has almost taken the form of an agrarian uprising. The present agrarian movement is based on a higher level of peasant class-consciousness. Ten years ago the peasants knew no better way of fighting its enemies than that of passive non-resistance. In the United Provinces in 1932, for example, "the tenants preferred to give away their land and renounce their rights rather than to pay the rent which under present conditions has become excessively high. Consequently the number of deserted holdings for the year grew from 20,860 to 71,430 while the number of forced collections of the land tax amounted to 256,284 ("Bombay Chronicle," January 26, 1933). Since then the Indian peasant has advanced far. Take this example reported in the Behar paper, "Searchlight," July 29, 1939: "On the 24th July, with about 500 military police and 200 hired men, 50 ploughs and a posse of state officials, Babu Shantinathjha, the landlord, raided a village called Sagarpur to replough the ploughed Bakast land in possession of tenants and sow seeds. He was met by 20 peasants and Kisan Sabha (Peasant Congress) workers who went to the spot to prevent the landlord's men from reploughing the land. They are reported to have been 'roughly handled' by the landlord's hooligans. On this they shouted 'Inklab Jindbad'" (Long live revolution) whereupon the landlord shouted, 'Down with the Red Flag!'

"Six of the peasants were severely wounded, they were taken to the hospital but were not admitted and remained lying outside the hospital the whole night. This was followed up by an action by the landlord against the 20. The peasants refused to furnish bail, on the ground that the landlord had not right to dispossess them. On this occasion the paper reports 'thousands of peasants, men and women, greeted the jail-goers with the usual Kisan slogans. The magistrate was annoyed and ordered the police to clear the court compound. The police thereupon began to push indiscriminately and one Mahabir Jha, a Kisan Sabha worker who was enthusiastically shouting slogans, was badly pushed and fell down. He protested and was taken to the magistrate who asked him to give a written statement. He was further asked to furnish bail, which he refused, and went to jail amidst cries of "Inklab Zindbad," "Angrezi Raj Nas Ho (Down with the British Government), and "Kisan Raj Nas Ho" (Let us establish a peasant government)." Incidents like this happen almost daily. On June 10th it was reported in the same paper, "the Kisan Sabha members have launched civil disobedience in the village Dekuli in connection with Bakast land

dispute. They went into the land and took away crops which were lying in custody of the police. They have also freely cultivated landlord's land and it is said, assaulted some of the landlord's men who went to prevent them. Military police have now been stationed in the village." There is little of passive resistance in all this!

This immense development of the class struggle in the villages as well as in the industrial areas reflects itself in the crisis within the National Congress, the most powerful organisation in India to-day. The crisis is the inevitable consequence of the growing contradiction between the rising militancy of the masses and the increasingly reactionary and pro-imperialist policy of the bourgeois leadership. The rank and file Congress members, drawn principally from the petit-bourgeois section of the community are drawing farther and farther away from the leadership and seeking a way out. In the absence of any guidance from the Socialist and Stalinist leaders, they had to accept whatever meagre leadership was forthcoming from other quarters. Many of them sought refuge in the League of Radical Congressmen of Mr. M. N. Roy; others have allied themselves with the "Forward Bloc" of Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose, a radical bourgeois nationalist leader.

The annual session of the Congress was essentially a trial of strength between the petit bourgeois malcontents and the bourgeois leadership. The latter, fully aware of the struggle that lay ahead were determined to strengthen their grip on the Congress organisation. They invited and carried through a series of resolutions the general effect of which has been to give dictatorial powers to the small ruling clique.

Let us take first the principal resolution of the last Annual Conference. This resolution reaffirmed the faith of the Congress in the leadership of Mr. Gandhi and his associates, stated that Gandhi alone could lead the national movement and ended by directing the President to nominate the Working Committee, the highest executive organ of the Congress according to the directions of Mr. Gandhi. It is worth noting that Mr. Gandhi is not himself a member of the Congress.

This was quickly followed by a resolution on civil disobedience as the only method of struggle sanctioned by the Congress. This resolution, passed at the last session of the All India Congress, states that "no Congressmen may offer or practice any civil disobedience movement without the previous sanction of the provincial Congress Committee." As the provincial committees are controlled by the leadership, and as most of the peasant leaders are members of the Congress, this means in effect the suppression of the Kisan movement. This was followed by

another resolution which released the Congress Ministers from the control of the Congress Committees and in fact subordinated the Congress organisations to the ministries and through them to the imperialists. The ministers, declared Mr. Patel, "cannot carry on in the present way. Outsiders (Congress Committees) cannot interfere in administrative affairs." The Congress Committees, as a saving grace are allowed to "meet the minister concerned for the redress of grievances." The bourgeoisie having climbed to the top over the heads of the masses is now kicking at those heads.

The crisis within the C.S.P. is caused by the same set of forces which has brought about the crisis within the Congress. The growing incompatibility between the shift in the class relationships and the policy of the party has produced an internal explosion. Shutting its eyes obstinately to the class issues involved, clinging like drowning men to the long exploded idea of a non-class anti-imperialist front, the colonial equivalent of the People's Front, without any faith in the revolutionary initiative and resourcefulness of the masses, seeing in the developing class struggle only dangerous symptoms, the C.S.P. leaders were completely paralysed.

At the annual session of the Congress when the main resolution already referred to came up, the C.S.P. leadership decided to adopt neutrality, revealing thereby its essential centrist character. The leaders were still hoping for a unity which had been shattered long ago as soon as the peasantry had begun to take direct action. The bourgeois leaders did not want unity, they wanted to isolate the peasantry and to crush it. A large section of the peasant workers, trade unionists and the representatives of the town middle classes had sensed the danger and would have followed a revolutionary lead. The only two lone voices pleading for unity were those of the Congress Socialists and the Stalinists.

It often happens that effects seem disproportionate to the cause. It has happened in this case. The single decision of the C.S.P. has thoroughly disorganised the Party. From the organisational point of view the set-back was considerable. Resignations came pouring in from all over India. The rank and file, who had not been consulted before the decision was adopted, threw up all discipline. The Associated Press reports that the Executive has taken disciplinary action against Mr. Suresh Chandra Hannerji, President of the All India Trade Union Congress and Mr. Deben Sen, a prominent member, for having openly flouted party discipline in publicly criticising the party attitude at the last Congress.

From the point of view of influence over the more advanced section of the masses, the results have proved even more disastrous. To cite an

example: at a meeting of the Executive Council of the Behar Provincial Press Workers' Federation on April 22, a resolution was adopted which runs as follows: "It is the considered opinion of the Executive Council of the Federation that the Congress Socialist Party or the Communists betrayed the cause of revolutionary nationalism at the Tripuri Congress by remaining neutral on the Pant resolution. This meeting warns the workers of India to beware of these so-called socialists who profess to be monopolists of radicalism but who are simply the left arm of Mr. Gandhi."

Indeed the capitulation of the C.S.P. to the bourgeois reactionaries was the inevitable product of the entire past history of the party. A socialist party which voluntarily denied the claim of representing a particular class, a party which announces itself on the radicalising agency of the Congress and at the same time refuses to face up to the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the native bourgeois leadership can only find its place in the garbage bins of history. It is the lot of every party to make mistakes but the revolutionary character of a party is determined by its attitude towards its mistakes. By the fact that even up to this day the C.S.P. leaders refuse to recognise the disastrous character of their policy shows that the policy was not due to mistake but flowed from the inherent rottenness of the Party. Mr. B. P. Sinha, a leading member of the Party, openly accuses those who criticise the party: "Not for mere ornament or petty political advantages did we attach the name of the Congress to our party. It is unfair to accuse us now of wanting to carry the whole of the Congress forward." (*Congress Socialist*, March 26).

Later on, however, this staunch revolutionary lets the cat out of the bag. "It does not matter very much," he writes, "who does it (prepare the country for the fight) as long as the work is being done. Mahatma Gandhi is prepared to lead the fight so let us add strength to his elbow and give him what help we can. *What else can we do?*"

Rammohan Lohia, one of the leading theoreticians, talking about the possibility of a split in the Congress, informs us that such talk is loose and dangerous and finds solace in the vision that "all major groups in the Congress are advancing and the difference among them lies in their type and rate of progress."

So the difference between Gandhism and Socialism is one that concerns their "rate of progress." Let us turn to Mr. Patel, Mr. Gandhi's closest associate. Thirteen months ago Mr. Patel expressed himself thus on the peasant movement: "If bad landlords do not mend their ways they will themselves meet their doom. But why

should we strike a blow at them and create a poisonous atmosphere?" Now Mr. Lohia would have us believe that the difference between Mr. Patel and a Socialist is to be found in their relative "rate of progress."

This brings us back to the point where we started out from. Mr. Lohia along with three others has resigned from the party leadership. This is the result of a split within the leading ranks. A section of the leadership under the inspiration of Mr. Jaiprakash Narain sees a way out of the doldrums into which the party has drifted by closer association with Mr. Bose and his Forward Bloc. This is the majority view which has prevailed. With the adhesion of the C.S.P., the Stalinists and Mr. M. N. Roy's League of Radical Congressmen, the "Forward Bloc" has been renamed the Left Consolidation Committee. Side by side with this new line Mr. Narain has established extremely friendly relations with the Stalinists both inside and outside his party. The minority section represented by Masani finds the solution in a closer and more intimate association

with the bourgeois leadership. It is difficult as yet to gauge the extent to which the Stalinists have managed to get control over the organisation. But that they are busy consolidating their position cannot be doubted.

The logical result of the present trend of the party is the merger with the Stalinist organisation. But Jaiprakash and his associates may find the price too heavy to pay. The party may then again swing back to the Masani trend. This is an eventuality which cannot be ruled out. But the "present position of being a party without a mind or to put it better, a party with another party's mind is insufferable and must end soon."

Whichever way ultimately is adopted it is certain that the party as such is incapable or developing in a revolutionary direction. It is time for the revolutionary elements inside it to make a serious appraisal of their position. Without a revolutionary party the anti-imperialist movement cannot succeed. It is time they asked themselves this question: "How is such a party to be built?"

PSOP in Conference

All the objective conditions making possible the social revolution in France have existed since 1934, except for the most essential, the presence of a real revolutionary party. Towards the end of 1935, when the reaction of the proletariat towards the offensive of the fascist leagues and Laval's decree laws was at its height, and again in June 1936, the presence of an active revolutionary party would have radically changed the situation. Due to its absence, however, the revolutionary spirit of the French working-class was dissipated by the Popular Front and little by little the working-class has been pushed back to its present disastrous situation.

Towards the end of 1935 the revolutionary Bolshevik Leninist wing in the Socialist Party was growing, the embryo of a workers' militia was growing within the Socialist Party (the T.P.P.S.) counting in Paris a few thousand workers, for which the trotskyists were greatly responsible. When they were expelled from the Socialist Party the possibility of forming a new revolutionary party was missed, due to the disastrous split among the Bolshevik Leninists among other reasons.

Then came the slow recession of the revolutionary tide and under these conditions the turning away of the more advanced workers from the treacherous popular front took the form of the growth of Pivert's "Gauche Revolutionnaire" (Revolutionary Left) within the Social Democracy and its formation after its expulsion in 1938 of the P.S.O.P. (Socialist Workers and Peasants Party). The P.S.O.P. could by no means be

called a revolutionary party (even Pivert has to admit it). It was much too heterogeneous, while the majority of its rank and file were capable of developing on revolutionary lines, the right wing leadership was, and is still, unable to break completely with their old social democratic habits. Pivert even proposed that the P.S.O.P. belong to the Popular Front.

Inside the party and within its leadership are a good proportion of freemasons and pure pacifists. In spite of this the great historical importance of the P.S.O.P. was that it represented, however deformedly, the development of a certain section of the working class in a Marxist direction and therefore became the potential rallying ground for all the scattered revolutionary forces in France. It is because of this that the two wings of the French Bolshevik Leninists (POI and PCI) entered the P.S.O.P. with the perspective of crystallising an important section of the P.S.O.P. rank and file around a revolutionary programme to fight against the liquidating and opportunist tendencies within the party. To attempt to prophesy whether the revolutionaries will capture a majority and thus transform the P.S.O.P. as a whole into a revolutionary party or whether the desire of Pivert and Co. to liquidate the P.S.O.P. into the S.P., or whether the disintegration due to opportunist policies will produce a split would be futile. However a serious study of the recent National Conference of the P.S.O.P. last Whitsun will enable us to appreciate the relation of forces at the moment existing.

Delegates 3 years in S.F.I.O. and P.S.O.P.

Before we deal with the various debates, note that according to the constitution of the P.S.O.P. a delegate to the Conference must have totalled three years membership in the S.P. and P.S.O.P. This measure obviously favours the right wing and old social democratic tendency, and handicaps the two Bolshevik Leninist groups which had not come from the social democracy. However the ex P.O.I. tendency was represented by four voting delegates as these represent federations of the party that had been built up only since 1938. This tendency also had three consultative delegates, Rous, Carton (delegate of the factory groups) and Godelle.

Under the pressure of the rank and file, however, the three years clause was amended and eighteen months is now the membership of the P.S.O.P. which one must have before holding responsible positions—a victory for the left although a very small one, most of the P.O.I. and ex-P.C.I. members having entered after December 1938 and still have one year to wait.

During the Conference the main points on which the party had to pronounce itself were the freemasonry, the fight against war, revolutionary defeatism, the work for a new international and finally the attitude towards work in the trade unions (C.G.T.). On each of these questions the Two Bolshevik Leninist groups fought for the adoption by the P.S.O.P. of firm revolutionary decisions as against the ambiguous and opportunist resolutions put forward by the right wing.

War.

On the question of imperialist war three main currents crystallised at the Conference.

- 1) The two pacifist tendencies (spokesmen Modiano and Roger).
- 2) The centrist position (Collinet) and
- 3) The Marxist and revolutionary defeatist tendency.

It was these last two tendencies which divided the support of most of the delegates.

Collinet in his resolution calls for the continuation of the class struggle in war-time, for the conquest of power in spite of all risks as a first step towards a just peace without indemnities. If this peace is not possible, the resolution preconceives the waging of the liberating struggle against international capitalism by rallying against them the world's oppressed peoples. So far, so good, but here Collinet stops; the resolution is silent on the necessity of an international to wage the struggle, he "forgets" to take a position on such important problems as the defence of the U.S.S.R. and revolutionary defeatism. It is in his articles and speeches in defence of his position, however, that Collinet absolutely contradicts his own resolution and shows up his opportunist position. In these he differentiates between the "democratic" and the fascist imperialisms and states that Hitler is the main

enemy. For this reason he condemns revolutionary defeatism (the logical conclusion to the continuation of the class struggle) whose aim he wrongly interprets as being the defeat of French imperialism vis-a-vis its German rival and he does not recognise that revolutionary defeatism has as its sole aim the victory of the proletariat and that the weakening of French imperialism vis-a-vis Germany is only a possible result of this struggle and not its aim (as he thinks it is). This reactionary position arises because he does not believe in the possibility of revolutionary upsurge in Germany as a result of a struggle in France (in complete contradiction with that part of his resolution in which he expresses the hopes of rallying all oppressed peoples). In view of his interpretation of the B-L policy of revolutionary defeatism the following extract from his article in the April number of "Cahiers Rouges" (P.S.O.P. theoretical organ) reveals how close he is to the social patriots; he writes "to wish the military defeat of the latter (French imperialism) is to unconsciously wish the victory of Hitler-Mussolini." To sum up, Collinet implies the abandonment of the class struggle in war time. The social democrats say it openly, that is the difference.

In opposition to this Rous, Weitz and Guerin presented a common resolution which comes out unambiguously in favour of revolutionary defeatism, and calls for the turning of the imperialist war into a civil war for the liberation of the masses, and the destruction of the oppression state machinery. The resolution declares that the support of the U.S.S.R. for one of the imperialist blocs would not change the imperialist character of the war. It proclaims that revolutionary defeatism is not a slogan for popular agitation, but a policy, and that the Russian bolsheviks translated revolutionary defeatism to the masses by the slogan "Bread, Peace and Freedom." The resolution ends by pointing out the necessity for a revolutionary international.

The confusion of certain elements in the P.S.O.P. on the nature of imperialism was revealed by a statement by Spinetta of the leadership that "the causes of war are many, the question of war and peace is also a sentimental one"! The Collinet and the Rous, Weitz, Guerin resolution each got 59 votes while the pacifist resolution of Modiano received 26 votes. A proposition by Herard (centrist) that a decision on war be postponed so that the party might discuss the question further received 45 votes. We see from this that nearly one third of the Conference took up a revolutionary position.

The New International

The building up of a revolutionary international is a logical and necessary part of the revolutionary struggle against war and therefore the P.S.O.P. cannot hope to carry out an effective

struggle against imperialist war unless it takes up a correct position on the problem of the revolutionary international. Even Pivert and Collinet call for a new international. But to call for one is not enough. One must know how to build it and one must build it up on a correct programme.

When the P.S.O.P. was founded last year Pivert had tried to get it to affiliate to the London Bureau but under the pressure of the rank and file abandoned this project. When the "Workers' International Front" against war was formed last October the P.S.O.P. participated. "Workers' International Front" is not an international; while the parties belonging to it are in agreement on the war question the differences they have on such essential problems as the conquest of power, the U.S.S.R. etc., remain unsolved. However, a number of parties belonging to the "Workers' International Front" formed the International Marxist Centre which has called an international conference for next September. Weitz, Rous and Guerin supported a resolution that the P.S.O.P. should take part in this international conference, the latter, Guerin, who is not a Bolshevik Leninist, criticised the haste of the International Marxist Centre in setting up its executive committee and issuing bulletins as a manoeuvre against the Fourth International, saying that this was not the way to unify all the revolutionary tendencies. He and Weitz demanded that the Fourth International be asked to participate. Rous of the P.O.I. while also supporting the resolution declared that the proposed conference should seek unification with the Fourth International. He said that he did not pose the question of the immediate affiliation of the P.S.O.P. to the Fourth International as there were still deep differences to be discussed.

Pivert, faced with these concrete proposals manoeuvred, and while agreeing that the "Workers' International Front" had failed as an international nucleus, he asked the P.S.O.P. Conference to vote 1) The approval of the work done by the "Workers' International Front." 2) A united front with all other anti-imperialist organisations. 3) The organisation of international liaisons. Pivert went on to say that the "Workers' International Front" should reach an agreement with pacifist organisations for a common struggle. At the same time he asked the P.S.O.P. to affiliate to the International Marxist Centre. Pivert's motion got 121 votes and Weitz's 41 votes. There were 25 abstentions.

On Trade Union Work.

Here again a definite line was drawn separating those who wanted to carry on revolutionary work from the reformists. For a Marxist the trade union movement is built by and based on the working class for the defence of its economic

interests. Freed from the stranglehold of the reformist and stalinist bureaucrats the C.G.T. can be of great importance in the development of the revolutionary strength of the proletariat although it can never replace the revolutionary party as an instrument for the social revolution. Therefore a double task befalls the revolutionary party. One, organise and support the struggle of the rank and file against the class collaborationist bureaucracy of Jouhaux-Racemond. Two, to give the party a strong base in the factories and trade union branches so as to lead the masses along the road to revolutionary action. For the carrying out of these tasks it is obvious that the party (the P.S.O.P. in this case) must ensure the discipline and co-ordinated action of its members in the trade unions, i.e., form trade union factions. The opportunists in the P.S.O.P., blind to these axioms of Marxism try to divide the economic and political struggle into two watertight compartments and take up the slogan of the reformists "for the independence of the C.G.T. from political parties." To which the revolutionaries answer "Yes, the C.G.T. must be independent from its class collaborationist leadership; this cannot be achieved without a revolutionary political struggle in the C.G.T., otherwise we leave the bureaucracy a free hand." The resolution of Vaillant against the formation of disciplined factions and leaving each member more or less free in his trade union work from the party's control got 122 votes. This resolution "advised" its trade union members to join the united front trade union movement, "The Syndicalist Class Struggle" influenced by the anarchists and pure syndicalists. The resolution of the Marxist minority presented by Carton (ex-P.O.I.) calling for organised work and national directives in the C.G.T. got 62 votes. On this question Guerin supported Vaillant's resolution thus revealing an opportunist trend.

The Freemasons.

In France the attitude towards the freemasonry has long been a question which has divided marxists from non-marxists. The former hold that the freemasonry is an organisation controlled by the bourgeoisie and in France particularly on the trade union and reformist bureaucrats. The freemasonry is thus a link binding the working class through a considerable number of its misleaders to the bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeois ideology in the freemasonic lodges where local trade union and reformist job holders rub shoulders with small business men and bourgeois lawyers, doctors and men of other "liberal" professions can be gauged by the following extract from the Bulletin of the Grand Lodge of France which was read by Guerin at the P.S.O.P. Conference. "...It is necessary to un-

derstand that if the Freemasonry of the Scottish Rite has always proclaimed the complete freedom of its members to belong to the political party of his choice and has allowed him to practice his own religion, it has always as an organisation demonstrated by its charter and its attitude not only its respect of the law but its attachment to the nation which allows it to exist and its loyalty to the State ... it has and will continue to avoid any participation in any movement whatsoever determined by international ideologies ... To serve and work for the prosperity of the French Nation and the solidity of the French State is for each freemason to work for the success of the Universal Masonic ideal."

And yet the majority of the leadership such as Jacquier, Rul (national secretary), Suzanne Nicolitch and Pivert himself are known freemasons. How then can the P.S.O.P. lead the proletariat against the repressive bourgeois state and fight for its destruction unless it gets rid of leaders who belong to an organisation which "serves and works for ... the solidity of the State." As Trotsky has put it, "In the freemasonry are concentrated all the parasitic forms which today give the Second as well as the Third International such a repulsive face. How can one break with the Social Democracy and the Comintern and at the same time remain linked with the worst caricature of these two organisations—the freemasons?"

The struggle of the marxists in the P.S.O.P. against the freemasonic relations of the leadership had been going on for a long time, even before the entry of the "Trotskyists." Things had reached such a stage that Rul stated during a meeting of the P.S.O.P. members (13.3.39) that if he was forced to choose between the freemasonry and the P.S.O.P. he would leave the P.S.O.P. Other right wingers also made similar statements and the right wing took up the cry that "Trotskyists" wanted to split the party by expelling all the freemasons. At the Conference Rouais, a right winger, spoke of sabotage by a handful of "agitators" and that it was a manoeuvre of the Fourth International to divide the party.

In answer to this Comrades Rous and Bailly of the Left Wing made a declaration in the April number of "Cahiers Rouges" ... "We shall prove that it is not we who menace the interests of the party. It is harmful to be silent on the fact that certain people who present to us freemasonry as democracy in its pure state, do not hesitate to violate proletarian democracy and free discussion in our party by putting us under this permanent threat. It is this attitude we say that goes against the interests of the party." So as not to play the game of the right Rous

and Bailly, and also Guerin, decided to ask the Conference to condemn the freemasonry in principle but not to decree the expulsion of comrades who refuse to leave the freemasonry.

Guerin's motion got 76 votes as against 62 for Nicolitch's motion of "next business" and 56 for Spinetta's supporting the freedom of members to be freemasons and deciding to make no exceptions. The Moroccan section of the P.S.O.P. had until now, been allowed to expel freemasons. Thus the pro-freemasons got a small majority, 112 as against 76, most of the centrists supporting Guerin's resolution.

The Report of the Political Bureau.

The Report of the Political Bureau and the discussions on it was an occasion for the various tendencies to analyse the past history of the movement and draw from it the correct conclusions for an orientation during the coming period. As the report defends the whole political line of the leadership during the past it should be carefully examined.

The report presented by Marceau Pivert retraced the history of the Revolutionary Left in the Socialist Party. Pivert recalled that in the face of the offensive of the fascist leagues in 1934-35 the Revolutionary Left called for direct action (the strike, demonstrations, etc.) They were the driving force of the auto-defence groups in the Socialist Party and responsible for the Co-ordinating Centre of Anti-Fascist Forces, forerunner of the united front between the Communist Party and Socialist Party.

Coming to the strike wave of 1936 the report explains that in the "Drapeau Rouge" (Red Flag) they put forward appropriate directives but their transition demands (factory committees, workers control) were fought by the reformists and stalinists.

The reports continues, pointing out that from the very beginning they had fought against the poison of social chauvinism and class collaboration, especially when Blum attempted to form a "National" Government in March 1938 and they had participated in united front work with the "Solidarite International Anti-fascist" (Anarchist influenced) against the repression against the P.O.U.M.

Towards the summer of 1938 the Blum-Paul Faure bureaucracy, alarmed at the growth of the Revolutionary Left, who had control of the Seine Federation and had a majority in 15 provincial federations of the Socialist Party, dissolved the Seine Federation and expelled its leaders, thus starting the split of the Revolutionary Left from the Socialist Party to form the P.S.O.P. Comrades who have followed events in France will remember how Pivert and the right

wingers around him in the Revolutionary Left Wing did everything to remain attached to the social democracy, how at the formation of the P.S.O.P. Pivert tried to get it to adhere to the Popular Front and his hope of making the P.S.O.P. "a continuation of the Socialist Party" a "second Socialist Party," etc., and how the pressure of the rank and file workers who had had enough of all this forced the P.S.O.P. more to the left. In his report Pivert had to admit that "the bad psychological preparation of our members (you mean leadership!) to a split (from the social democracy) did not permit us to bring them all with us" although at the same time he defends his policy "we still think that our tactic in spite of these inconveniences was the best adopted..."

Since we are on the subject of the split of the Revolutionary Left from the Socialist Party it might be well to go back and examine the role of the Revolutionary Left when the Bolshevik Leninists split from the Socialist Party in 1935. This split coincided with the rising revolutionary temper of the masses and under the conditions of tension existing, the split from the social democracy of a revolutionary left wing opened up great possibilities of the crystallisation of certain sections of the proletariat around a new revolutionary party. Pivert, instead of lining up with the expelled and defaching several hundred more workers, voted for the expulsion. Every time that the occasion for a break of a section of the militant workers from the rotting Socialist Party has presented itself, Pivert, in spite of his opposition to social chauvinism (as proclaimed in his report) hesitates to break with the "old home."

Then came September 1938 and the united front of the P.S.O.P. with the pacifist reformists in the C.G.T. (who on November 30th helped betray the general strike) and the petty bourgeois pacifists and the anarchists which Pivert attempts to justify.

As to the general situation the report makes a Marxist analysis of the imperialist rivalries and the position of the U.S.S.R. stating that the Soviet masses must defend the conquests of October by the overthrow of the bureaucracy; calls for the class struggle against the Daladier dictatorship and the war and proclaims the "internationalism" of the P.S.O.P., but not the need for an international.

The report ends up on the old theme that the P.S.O.P. is neither Social Democratic (because it has a revolutionary policy) nor "bolshevik" (as it is a democratic, and not "totalitarian organisation).

The minority supported a counter report pre-

sented by Rous basing itself on a Marxist analysis of the role of the P.S.O.P. which got 25 votes as against 162 for Pivert's report, there being 13 absentees. It is on the basis of this vote that the official minority being a bloc of the ex-P.O.I. (Rous) with the Left Centrists Guerin and Weitz, were supported by the ex-P.C.I. tendency and the youth who did not have representation in the conference in accordance with their strength.

The debate on the political report presented an occasion for the rabid "anti-Trotskyites" such as Jacquier (a freemason) to demand a commission of inquiry into "Trotskyite activities."

Conclusions.

During the conference a Marxist minority crystallised around Rous-Weitz-Guerin supported by the youth, which on the various questions, war, freemasons, international, etc., rallied varying members of centrists. 59 votes against 130 on war; 76 against 112 on freemasonry; 62 against 122 on the trade unions; 23 against 162 on the political report.

The right wing has started an offensive by reactionary means with the expulsion of six youth comrades (members of the ex-P.C.I.) which aims at liquidating the whole left wing, hoping that, freed from this opposition they can remake the P.S.O.P. in the image of a second Socialist Party or even return to it. The Bolshevik Leninist groups knew when they entered that should a left wing crystallise the leadership would try to break with them. Whether the present offensive of the right wing will result in a split or whether the crisis will be delayed it is difficult to say.

But one thing is certain that a party which is as heterogeneous as the P.S.O.P. and which is incapable of ridding itself of freemasons and petty bourgeois pacifists cannot stand up successfully against the repression which a war would impose on it. The non-Marxist and opportunist elements will either go back to the social democracy or disappear altogether from the political scene. The French Bolshevik Leninists must try to rally the left wing elements of the P.S.O.P., not only on a correct political basis but in a disciplined and serious organisation which will be able to stand up to conditions of illegality. One of the necessary conditions for this regroupment is the unification of the two Bolshevik Leninist groups, the ex-P.O.I. and the ex-P.C.I., the tactical and organisational differences being resolved by free and sincere discussion on the basis of the common day to day struggles in the P.S.O.P.

H.R., Paris.