The International Opposition Conference

by Will Herberg

The conference of representatives of the Communist Opposition groups of the various countries of the world which will meet in Berlin towards the end of this year will not only be a highly significant gathering in itself but will mark the completion of one stage and the initiation of another in a movement of the greatest historical importance in the development of the international labor movement. It will mark the concentration on a world scale of all those forces, scattered thru many countries and over many continents, which are striving to save the Communist International and to restore it to the path marked out by Lenin for winning the leadership over the masses of the toilers and oppressed peoples of the world in the struggle for emancipation from the bloody yoke of imperialism. With this conference the chapter of the *international struggle* of the Communist Opposition will really begin!

Who can today deny that the Communist world movement is in a deep crisis? Quite apart from the profound ideological crisis characterized by an open contempt for the best-tested teachings of Lenin and the most valuable experiences of the Communist movement, the Communist International today presents a picture of defeat, demoralization and decline. The French Communist Party has—according to official admissions—lost 55 per cent of its membership. The Italian Communist Party—according to Manuilsky—"no longer exists as a political factor." The Communist Parties of Germany, Great Britain, and other countries have lost all vestige of influence in the mass trade unions—again by official admission. The Finnish Party has just lost all (23) deputies in the elections. The Communist International plays no role whatever—except a destructive one—in the world-shaking Indian events. And so on. . .

At the same time the world Communist movement has completely lost its unity. It is now clearly and definitely divided into three main streams, both on an international scale and in the various countries: the tendency of the Trotskyites, the official (Stalin) tendency and the tendency of the Communist Opposition. This three-fold split has for several years assumed an organized and regular character.

From our vantage point today we can see the fundamental objective cause of this disastrous situation. We can see now that the gap that has been progressively developing between the course of the Russian revolution and the revolution in the capitalist world has not been bridged by the development of an international collective leadership for the Communist world movement; on the contrary, the leadership of the Communist International has been growing more narrow, more and more a CPSU leadership, more and more a leadership concentrated in the hands of the leading clique of the CPSU. Basing itself upon the outlook, perspectives and methods of work of the CPSU (or rather of its leading clique), the leadership of the Comintern has proved unable to solve the great problems of analysis, strategy and tactics brought forward by the complex conditions of world capitalism in its present stage of development. The leadership of the CI has attempted to meet this situation with a schematic ultra-left sectarian line and with burocratic factional methods. . . and the results for the Comintern are clear to be seen!

The Trotskyist movement which stands today in opposition from one direction to the line of the Communist International is quite incapable of becoming the bearer of the struggle to save the Comintern. In its traditional policies Trotskyism represents a consistent, if somewhat abstract form of ultra-leftism —in spite of all its recent "new turns" In its methods it is no more than the inverted reflection of the well-known methods of Stalinism.

The historical task of mobilizing those forces within and without the Communist International which alone can carry thru to victory the struggle for saving the Comintern falls to the movement represented by the Communist Opposition groups thruout the world whose very existence is tied up with this great problem.

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The Communist Opposition movement in the various countries did not arise in accord with a prearranged plan along a prearranged scheme—from the "top," so to speak. On the contrary, it arose in the different countries at different time and under different circumstances as far as external appearances go. The issues on which the various Opposition groups first made their appearance are quite various and are closely rooted in the specific conditions of the individual parties and countries. We need but compare the origins of the Opposition in Germany, Sweden and the USA to be convinced of this. But all Opposition movements, without exception, arose as *movements of resistance to the application of the new ultra-left course of the Ecci in the specific conditions of the various countries.* This was the fundamental bond of unity of the individual national Opposition groups.

The oldest Opposition group (Germany) is hardly two years old and the youngest are still in the process of formation, while many are still to come. Yet these few months have been months of great events. These months of struggle have shown to everybody that a common political point of view is to be found in the ideas and activities of all Opposition groups and it did not take long to make it apparent that this was no more common point of view but a profound agreement on the most important questions of political analysis, strategy and tactics and methods of struggle. Any sort of study of the important programmatic documents of the various Oppositions (especially German, Austrian, Czechish, Swedish, Alsatian, etc.) will show this.

By the beginning of 1930 attempts at common international action of the various Communist Oppositions began to be made. It is only necessary to call attention to the common international appeal sent to the CI in March 1930 and to the international Opposition manifesto on India that has proven of such great political importance.

In March 1930 also there took place a preliminary international conference in Berlin attended by German, Swedish, and Czechish comrades which did some important preparatory work in the direction of the international consolidation of our struggle. The most important achievement of this preliminary conference were the proposal of a Draft Platform for the international Opposition movement and the establishment of the International Information Center in Berlin with an international organ, *The International Information of the Communist Opposition,* appearing in German and English. It was this preliminary conference that laid the basis for the first international conference to take place towards the end of this year.

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What will be the great tasks of the international conference? In the first place, the international conference will make clear that no tendencies for the formation of a "new" Communist International will be tolerated. It will make clear that the purpose of our international consolidation is the concentration of forces to *save* the Communist International, to *reunite* it, to restore it to the road of mass work and revolutionary effectiveness. Just as individual Oppositionists combine into local groups for greater effectiveness, local groups unite into national organizations for the same reason, so it is necessary for the various national groups to consolidate into an *international faction of the Communist Opposition.*

The conference will have to discuss the question of a Platform for the International Communist Opposition on the basis for a thoro consideration of the draft presented at the Berlin conference by Comrade Thalheimer. A report of the development and status of the international Opposition movement, followed by special reports of the representatives of the various groups, will provide a basis for a thoro considration of the achievements, shortcomings and tasks of our Opposition movement. The conference will also have before it the task of thoroly discussing the question of trade union tactics which has shown itself more and more to be the pivotal point of the whole struggle. Finally, it is certain that that it will be the task of our conference to establish a strong, fuctioning international center for the Communist Opposition, a real international center of information, guidance and direction. Our struggle is becoming more and more an international struggle, a struggle which cannot be conducted without a functioning international center.

—cannot sit by and wait until somehow the trade union line of the Party changes. As Communists we cannot stand idly by and see the workers leaderless and at the mercy of the bosses and the burocrats. It is therefore our mandatory task to throw in all our forces to carry thru a Communist line in the unions, to accomplish what the Party leaves undone or misdoes. This independent activity in the trade unions must become one of our central tasks as a group.

28. The initiative in rebuilding the left wing in the trade union movement must be taken by us. In the reactionary unions our comrades must raise the struggle for militant unionism and in this way rally the advanced workers to the left wing movement. Wherever possible left wing organizations (clubs, leagues) should be set up by our comrades, to include all workers ready to fight against the bosses and the burocrats.

29. In the TUUL-unions our comrades must take the lead in mobilizing whatever non-Party workers there are for a struggle against the ruinous policy of the TUUL and the union leaderships, along the line outlined above. Our work in the TUUL-unions is coordinated with our work in the old unions thru the slogan of trade union unity—one industrial union in every industry. In the TUUL-unions also we establish clubs or organizations of workers who support our line and these groups we tie up with the corresponding groups in the old unions.

30. The independent activity of our group is not something separate and apart from our work in winning Party members for our line. On the contrary the two are complementary. The winning of Party members for our course is necessary for a successful execution of our independent line while, on the other hand, the best way to convince the Party membership of the correctness of our line is to show them what it means in practice in contrast to results of the official line of the Party.

Unite the Plumbers Helpers!

The plumbers helpers to-day find themselves in a condition as never before. Being the only unorganized men in the industry, they face more hardships than any other men in the industry, such as the cutting of their already low pay, speed-up, and unemployment, etc.

The plumbers' helpers show a willingness to fight against these conditions. They proved this by their walking out on spontaneous strikes when the five-day week went into effect which meant the cutting of wages for the helpers. The plumbers helpers fought these strikes without a leadership and in some cases were successful in getting 40c. a day more than before. They were getting the miserable wage of $4.00 when all other helpers in the building industry got from $7.00 a day to $11.00 a day. Today some of the plumbers helpers in comparison with the $66.00 a week of the journeymen, get $22.00 a week and many casses as low as $3.00 a day. What did the Communist Party do about it or the American Association of Plumbers Helpers? The. A. A. of P. H. was a real organization at one time. The answer can be seen by the fact that the plumbers helpers fought without a leadership. What was the cause for it?

The Communist Party expelled three of its leading members in the Plumbers Helpers Union for supporting the "left opposition." (The Trotsky group). Comrade Sprerigen, the vice-president of the American Association of Plumbers Helpers, and the other brothers who worked in the organization as members of its executive board, were aware of these conditions and wrote asking Comrade Helfand, then the president of the A. A. P. H. to call a meeting. They wrote twice or three times. As yet they have received no reply. The three brothers got together with some plumbers helpers in the trade and founded the United Association of Plumbers Helpers which the party tried to capture or smash. But they did not succeed. Today we have between 200 and 250 members in the U. A. of P. H.

It's about time we stopped fighting and get together and build one big union for all of the plumbers helpers instead of fighting independetly, and for the Communist Party to drop its stupid policies in the trade unions and fight the common enemy.

It is not too late yet to start a real organization of the plumbers helpers in the face of the unemployment, speed-up and cutting of pay, etc. etc. Together we must fight like never before against the A. F. of L. fakers and the bosses. Only by uniting our left-wing forces can we organize the plumbers helpers and all other workers.

The plumbers helpers are willing to fight and will fight. Let us strike while the iron is hot.

I will deal more correctly in a future article on the present situation of the plumbers helpers. I am sending these articles to all left-wing papers.

I am not affiliated with any of the left-wing groups.

Mac. Kudler.

Call for an International Conference of the Communist Opposition

On the basis of a preliminary discussion with the Swedish, Czechish, and American comrades, we hereby call for December 16 and 17, 1930 an

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

of the

COMMUNIST OPPOSITION

for Berlin, Wilhelmstrasse 135.

Agenda:

1. Reports of the various countries.
2. The international platform of the Opposition.
3. Organization of international cooperation.

Participation with decisive vote is allowed to all Opposition groups who agree in principle with the draft of an international platform made public in the spring of 1930. Groups that want to be present with advisory vote must send a notification before November 1930 to Berlin, Wilhelmstrasse 135 (Junius Verlag).

Proposals for the order of business must be made before December 1, 1930. The expenses of delgations must be born by the various national groups themselves.

With Communist greetings

National Council, Communist Party of Germany (Opposition)

HEINRICH BRANDLER