

# THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

## New Phenomena in the International Labour Movement.

By John Pepper.

A number of new phenomena are to be observed in the international Labour movement. The temporary stabilisation of capitalism has, in some countries, given fresh vigour to the ranks of the aristocracy of Labour and increased its privileges, with the result that the Labour movement has to a certain extent, veered to the Right. On the other hand, two powerful factors are more and more driving the masses of workers into opposition to capitalism, and in this way producing a strong current towards the Left in the Labour movement; these factors are 1) the crisis and the wholesale unemployment in a number of countries, 2) the successful building up of socialism in the Soviet Union. In view of the general veering to the Left of

the proletariat and the crystallisation of Left groups, we can speak with some justification of a new growth of tendencies in favour of a **Second and a Half International**. We will cite the most important signs.

**1. The alliance of the English and Russian proletariat.** The Joint Advisory Council for Trade Union Unity of the working classes of **Great Britain** and the **Soviet Union** in itself represents a form of organisation of this alliance. The continuing unemployment and the hopeless industrial crisis compel the English workers to regard the **Soviet Union** as the only large market in which it would be possible to sell English wares. The rapid succession of a Liberal, a Conservative and a Labour Ministry and the return to power of a Conservative Government have given sufficient evidence of the impossibility of improving the situation of the English worker in the capitalistic anarchy. At the same time, the prospects of social construction in the Soviet Union fill them with fresh hopes. That the **Finnish** and **Norwegian** trade unions have joined the Unity Committee is a further sign of the growth of this fighting spirit.

**2. The success of the Labour delegations.** One of the most important characteristics of our time is indubitably that the European workers have begun to "discover" the Soviet Union. The success of the English delegation of workers was extraordinary, and the results of the visit of the **German** workers delegation are gradually becoming more and more evident. There were years in which the Soviet Union was an inexhaustible source of revolutionary inspiration to the workers of the whole world. Then came the civil war. Both the former and living conditions in the Soviet Union began to be used as a "terrible warning" by social democratic agitators. A great change has now come over the scene. Even in America about 200,000 workers have formed committees with the object of sending workers' delegations to the country of socialist construction and of government by the workers.

**3. The formation of a Left wing of Social Democracy in all countries.** There is now hardly a single country in which there is not an embittered fight going on between the Left and Right tendencies in the bosom of Social Democracy.

The stabilisation of Social Democracy has proceeded parallel to that of capitalism. The Hamburg World Congress had brought about the amalgamation of the Second and the Second and a Half Internationals. The rejoicing over this amalgamation however did not last long. An embittered fight between the fractions is now raging throughout international Social Democracy.

The Minority Movement in the English trade unions gave rise to the first organised form of the Left wing, and now the first steps are being taken to organise a **Left wing in the British Labour Party**. The social democratic opposition in Saxony which for a long time preserved its local character, has now grown into a movement which embraces the whole of **Germany**, and organised Left groups are opposing the official policy of the party in **Frankfort**, **Mecklenburg**, **Hamburg** and even in **Berlin**. We have seen how, at the Party Congresses of **French**, **Polish** and **Hungarian** Social Democracy, powerful opposition movements have simultaneously come into being. The question of a coalition government and of an understanding with the bourgeois is now shaking **French**, **German**, **Polish** and **Hungarian** Social Democracy to their foundations.

This Left opposition within Social Democracy is still to a large extent uncertain and wavering. Nevertheless it exists, and if in the future it continues to grow as it has done in the last few months, we shall soon be able to say that before long nothing but two wings — without a body — will remain of Social Democracy which was once a united whole.

**4. The success of the Communists at elections.** The last few months have brought success to the Communist Parties at the elections in **Belgium**, **Czechoslovakia** and **Germany**. The most recent municipal elections in **Berlin**, the **Prussian** provincial elections and the elections for the South German Landtag have shown an increase in the number of communist and a decrease in the number of social democratic votes. Even the bourgeois Press was compelled to acknowledge that after the letter of the E.C.C.I. and after the defeat of the policy of Ruth Fischer-Maslov, the masses have again begun to draw nearer to the Communist Party. The **Czech** Communists polled about a million votes, and even the Berlin "**Vorwärts**" had regrettfully to state that the result of the parliamentary elections represented the complete annihilation of Czech Sozial Democracy. Even the small Communist Party of **Belgium** succeeded

in making the first breach in the mighty wall of Belgian Social Democracy.

5. **Attempts to draw nearer to the 3rd International.** Leftward tendencies are making their appearance not only in a national but also in an international measure. One of the first signs of this was **Otto Bauer's speech in Vienna**. He was forced to acknowledge the socialist development of the Soviet Union and emphasised the necessity of an alliance between the international proletariat and the first workers' republic. At the same time, true to his nature, he demanded, more or less as a reward, the liquidation of the **Austrian C.P.** A second sign is given us by an interesting article from the pen of **Nielson**, the Danish social democratic member of Parliament. He writes that, whilst the **Russian** worker is building up socialism, the situation in **Denmark** and in the **whole of Europe** is getting worse from day to day and that wholesale unemployment has become a permanent phenomenon and that revolution is inevitable. In his opinion however, the communists are unnecessary because they are only disturbers of law and order and because, if revolution should become necessary, it could be carried out by the Danish social democrats alone.

The most important sign of the tendency to approach the Comintern is however the latest resolution of the **English Independent Labour Party**, which consists of two parts. In the first part it is stated that the Independent Labour Party must endeavour to unite the **Second and Third Internationals**. It will bring up this question at the next conference of the **Second International** and at the same time approach the **Third International** in writing. It proposes to relegate the question of armed force to the background and to concentrate all its strength on the fight against capitalism and imperialism. The second part of the resolution states that the Independent Labour Party will not in the future absolutely strive to obtain complete unanimity in the resolutions of the 2nd International. It no longer conceals its Left point of view, and thanks to that "a Left wing is being formed and a lively discussion on the new ideas and the new policy will develop in the whole International."

All these facts and events are signs of the movement, the differentiation and the revolutionising of the international Labour movement. It is already possible to discern the outlines of tendencies of the nature of those held by the **Second and a Half International** among the masses of workers. Once more the wind is in the same direction as in 1920 when the **Independent Labour Party** and the **German Independent Social Democratic Party** sent representatives to Moscow to negotiate as to the conditions of admission into the **Third International**. The significance of these signs should not of course be exaggerated, on the other hand however we should be guilty of thoughtlessness if we closed our eyes to the importance of these facts. It is necessary to manoeuvre with care, patience and wise tactics, though of course this involves a certain danger of opportunism. It would however be a great mistake on our part if we did not get in touch with the masses of workers who are pressing towards the Left.