



The Strategy Of the World Revolution

By

**Leon
Trotsky**

**25
c**

LEON TROTSKY

The Strategy
of the World
Revolution

Leon Trotsky

THE STRATEGY OF THE
WORLD REVOLUTION

Translated with an Introduction by

Max Shachtman

NEW YORK
Communist League of America (Opposition)

1 9 3 0

Published in November 1930 by the Militant Press, New
York. Twenty-Five Cents a copy and eighteen cents in
bundle orders of five or more.

C o n t e n t s

Introduction	v
1. The Complete Inadequacy of the Central Chapter of the Draft Program	1
2. The Characteristic Features of the Strategy of the Revolutionary Epoch and the Rôle of the Party	5
3. The Third Congress and the Question of the Permanent Revolution according to Lenin and according to Bucharin	11
4. The German Events of 1923 and the Lessons of October	16
5. The Basic Strategical Mistake of the Fifth Congress	23
6. The "Democratic-Pacifist" Era and Fascism	30
7. The Right Dregs of Ultra-Left Policy	39
8. The Period of Right-Centrist Down-Sliding	47
9. The Manœuverist Character of Revolutionary Strategy	56
10. The Strategy of Civil War	63
11. The Question of the Party Régime	67
12. The Reason for the Defeat of the Opposition and Its Perspectives	80

I n t r o d u c t i o n

"It seems," Engels wrote to Eduard Bernstein, "that *every* workers' party of a large country can only develop itself in internal struggle, as is established by dialectical laws of development in general." What Engels wrote half a century ago in connection with the task of constituting a revolutionary party in France still holds good today in this sense: that decay and collapse threaten the workers' party unless its foundations and superstructure are repeatedly tested to determine the soundness with which they meet the veering winds of the class struggle.

The régime imposed upon the official Communist movement throughout the world by a series of events, absolutely without precedent in history, formally prohibits such an examination in the domain over which it holds sway. And for good reason, because such a test is not only the principal prerequisite for the overthrow of the régime but a guarantee that this overthrow would follow. This explains why it greets its ideological adversaries in the ranks of Communism with such rabid fury, with abuse and falsehood, and even with physical violence and persecution. It regards the mildest questioning with nervous suspicion, and the idea of a grouping within the movement—however temporary—that defends a conception different from that which prevails, it denounces as heresy and treason, despite the fact that such groupings have not only been common in the movement but have frequently been necessary and have contributed to its progress.

Productive ideological thought, vibrant with the life that is possible only by absorption of experience, has been stifled by the official party régime, which substitutes for it a worthless product, thoroughly sterilized by the bureaucratic censor. Hand in hand with this degrading process

goes the regimentation of the party. We have always conceived our self-imposed revolutionary discipline as fundamentally different from the discipline of the barracks. In the barracks, the soldier does not select his officers; he does not help to formulate the strategy and tactics of the army; he fights for a class other than his own; his function is bounded on all sides by the word *Obey!* In the revolutionary army, that is, in the Communist party, all this is reversed. More accurately, all this *was* reversed up to the time the movement became corroded by what has been properly called Stalinism.

It is not so much a rigid adherence to a political course that the dominant group in Communism demands of the membership. Even deviations from this course are tolerated, particularly since it is changed with bewildering abruptness and frequency. Like the English Established Church, which would "more readily pardon an attack on thirty-eight of its thirty-nine articles than on one-thirtieth of its income", the bureaucracy is prepared to forgive anything but a flaunting of its cardinal tenet: an unquestioning obedience that flows from a recognition of its own infallibility. This newly-discovered requirement for membership of the Communist party has had devastating effects upon the Communist movement. It has consolidated a bureaucratic caste which is divided from the ranks of the movement and the realities of the struggle by an ever-widening gulf, and reflects their interests and demands with diminishing accuracy.

The recent history of the American Communist movement is replete with examples of the ravages of this system. In the sphere of leadership alone, its abuse have more than once been demonstrated—and, rejecting the spurious syndicalist philosophy of headlessness, the Marxist attaches great importance to the problem of leadership. In 1925, the desires and votes of two-thirds of the American Communist Party membership were swept aside by a cablegram from the Executive Committee of the Communist Interna-

tional which *appointed* the group representing the remaining third of the party to lead it. That is the origin of the four years of opportunist leadership of the Lovestone-Pepper faction in this country. In 1929, matters had progressed to the point where a similar decision from the international center of the bureaucracy, the Stalinist machine, wiped out the desires and votes of nine-tenths of the party membership and appointed the Foster group, representing the remaining tenth, to direct the party's destinies.

Naturally, such leaderships, which are made or unmade in ten minutes, are not to be taken seriously. And those who appoint them do not take them seriously. They demand of the national leaderships the same obedience and belief in infallibility that is demanded by the latter from those they are appointed to lead.

This pernicious system inevitably produces its own opponents. Unable to withstand any criticism of its policies, it resorts to expulsion of its critics and compels them to make these criticisms outside of the ranks of the official party. The expulsion of those elements whose point of view is so essential for the party's progress only accentuates the critical situation by leaving the bureaucracy a freer hand for its ruinous conduct. In turn, this makes a revolutionary criticism an inescapable necessity for the movement.

It is with such a criticism that the present work of comrade Trotsky occupies itself. If anything had to be added to what events and words in the past have shown to disprove the view of the sages in the petty bourgeois camp, and the petty bourgeois in the Communist camp, who see nothing in the great historical dispute but a "personal fight between Trotsky and Stalin", this work will more than suffice. Its pithy contrasting of the standpoint of the Left Opposition with that of the official point of view (Stalin-Bucharin), and an assembling of the facts and events by which these opposing views can be conclusively verified, shows that what is involved here relates to the most funda-

mental problems of the revolution. It has a more than ordinary significance for the American Communist movement, which is so unschooled in Marxian theory, whose revolutionary traditions are so vague and feeble, whose experiences are so limited. It will be of enormous aid in consolidating the vanguard, which has been demoralized by the vulgar "practical people" who have only contempt (and fear) for theoretical consideration, without which no sound progress is possible. In addition, it will help to dispel the clouds of falsehood and distortion with which the real views of the Left Opposition have been enveloped, not only by the present leadership of the Fosters and Browders but by their predecessors in the Lovestone faction who still live largely by deliberately lying about the Opposition.

* * *

The work itself has an instructive history. It was written by comrade Trotsky in the early part of 1928, while in exile at Alma-Ata. It was part of a larger document sent to the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, devoted to a criticism of the draft of a program for the International submitted by Stalin and Bucharin, an amiable unity against the Left wing which Trotsky already then predicted would not last very long. Finding it impossible to suppress the document entirely, the bureaucracy took the first section, dealing with a criticism of the theory of socialism in one country, and the third section, dealing with a criticism of the policy pursued in the Chinese revolution, and presented it to a selected number of the delegates to the Congress. Even these two sections were so strictly guarded that it was next to impossible for a delegate to retain a copy of them—yes, the very delegates who were presumably deciding upon its merits! Two of the delegates, however, comrades James P. Cannon of the American party and Maurice Spector of the Canadian party, were so deeply impressed by the document that they determined to bring it before the eyes of the Communist

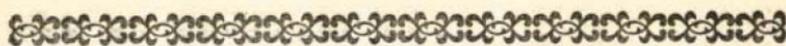
workers and to defend the views elucidated in it. A description of the manner in which a copy was finally obtained, would read like a romance. It is sufficient to say—and what a crushing condemnation of the régime this is!—that a copy had to be literally smuggled out of the Soviet Union, so that the Communist workers might judge its merits by reading the document itself and not merely rely upon the bureaucrat's cynically falsified version of it. It was finally published in the United States under the title *The Draft Program of the Comintern, A Criticism of Fundamentals*, and the effect it had in convincing some of the best militants in the movement of the correctness of the Opposition's views fully confirmed the fears which animated the Stalin-Bucharin régime to suppress it.

The second section, which the international bureaucrats condemned all the more heartily because they had never read it, was never even presented to the Sixth Congress delegates. In fact, it was only some time after the publication of the American edition that we even discovered that there had been a second section! We are glad to have been able to snatch this document out of the underground vaults of the apparatus and present it to the serious militants.

We wish to take this occasion to express the appreciation of the publishers for the generosity of our comrades Martin Abern, Max Engel, Morris Lewit and Philip Shulman. It is their financial contributions that made it possible for us to print this booklet and sell it at a price that insures a swift and wide distribution. We also wish to express our thanks to comrade Cornelia Davis who volunteered her valuable aid in correcting and checking the proofs.

Max Shachtman.

New York, November 20, 1930.



Strategy and Tactics in the Imperialist Epoch

1. The Complete Inadequacy of the Central Chapter of the Draft Program

THE DRAFT program of the Communist International contains a chapter devoted to the questions of revolutionary *strategy*. It must be acknowledged that its purpose is perfectly correct and corresponds to the aim and spirit of an international program of the proletariat in the imperialist epoch.

The conception of revolutionary strategy was first developed in the post-war years and in the beginning undoubtedly under the influence of the war terminology. Nevertheless, it did not by any means arise accidentally. Before the war we spoke only of the tactics of the proletarian party. This conception conformed entirely to the then prevailing trade union-parliamentary methods which did not go beyond the limits of current daily demands and tasks. Under the conception of tactics is understood the system of measures that serves one single timely task or a single branch of the class struggle. Revolutionary strategy on the contrary embraces a combined system of actions which by their association, consistency and their growth must lead the proletariat to the conquest of power.

The basic principles of revolutionary strategy were naturally formulated at the time Marxism put before the revolutionary parties of the proletariat the task of the conquest of power on the basis of the class struggle. The

First International, however, could formulate these principles, properly speaking, only theoretically, and only test them partially in the experiences of various countries. The epoch of the Second International, however, led to such methods and ideas according to which, in the notorious expression of Bernstein, "the movement is everything, the end nothing". In other words, the strategical task disappeared and was dissolved in a "movement" of single tactical daily problems. Only the Third International re-established the rights of the revolutionary strategy of Communism and completely subordinated the tactical methods to it. Thanks to the valuable experiences of the first two Internationals, upon whose shoulders the third rests, thanks to the revolutionary character of the present epoch and the gigantic historic experiences of the October revolution, the strategy of the Third International immediately obtained an invaluable fighting experience of the very highest historical degree. The ten years of existence of the Third International, however, at the same time revealed to us a panorama not only of great battles but also of the greatest defeats of the proletariat, beginning with 1918. To a certain extent, therefore, the questions of strategy and tactics should have constituted the central point in the program of the Comintern. In reality, however, the chapter in the draft program devoted to the strategy and tactics of the Communist International, with the sub-title "The Road to the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", is one of the worst and most devoid of substance. The part of this chapter that concerns the East really consists only of a generalization of the mistakes made and the preparation of new ones.

The beginning of the chapter engages in a criticism of anarchism, of revolutionary syndicalism, of constructive socialism and many others. Here we have a series of literary imitations of the *Communist Manifesto* which in its time opened the era of the scientifically established policy of the proletariat through an ingeniously terse characterization of the most important varieties of Utopian socialism. But to engage now, in the tenth year of the existence of

the Comintern, in a desultory, dry criticism of the "theories" of Corneliesen, Arturo Labriola, Bernard Shaw or lesser known Guild socialists, means that instead of answering political needs one becomes a victim of purely literary pedantry. This ballast could easily disappear from the program and find a place in the field of agitational literature.

So far as the strategical tasks are concerned, in the proper sense of the word, the draft program limits itself to such A B C wisdom as:

"The extension of its influence over the majority of its own class . . . , as well as over the broad section of the toiling masses in general . . ."

"The daily work of conquering the trade unions has an especially high importance. . . ."

"The winning of the broadest section of the poorest peasantry is also [?] of outstanding importance . . ."

All these commonplaces are simply enumerated by rotation here. This means that they are brought up here without any connection with the historical character of the epoch and therefore, in their *present* abstract, scholastic form, could be inserted without difficulty even in a resolution of the Second International. Quite drily and scantily, the most important problems of the program are considered here in a brief schematic paragraph which is much shorter than the paragraph on "constructive" or "Guild" socialism. This means then: The strategy of the revolutionary overthrow, the conditions and the roads to the armed uprising itself and the seizure of power, all this is presented here abstractly and pedantically, and without the slightest connection with the living experiences of our epoch.

We find here the mention of the great struggles of the proletariat in Finland, Germany, Austria, the Hungarian Soviet republic, the September days in Italy, the events of 1923 in Germany, the general strike in England, and so forth, only in the form of a naked, chronological enumeration. Yet even this is not to be found in the sixth chapter, which deals with the strategy of the proletariat, but in the second — on "The General Crisis of Capitalism and the

First Phase of Development of the World Revolution". In other words: The great struggles of the proletariat are described here only as objective occurrences, as an expression of the "general crisis of capitalism" and not as strategic attempts of the proletariat at the seizure of power. It is sufficient to refer to the fact that the rejection — necessary in itself — of revolutionary adventurism ("putschism") is dealt with in the program without an attempt being made to answer the question whether, for example, the uprising in Esthonia, or the explosion of the Sofia cathedral in 1924, or the last uprising in Canton were heroic expressions of revolutionary adventurism or, on the contrary, planned actions of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat. A program which does not answer this burning question in its paragraph on "putschism" is only a diplomatic office job and no document of Communist strategy.

This abstract, supra-historical treatment of the questions of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat is of course no accident for this program.

Besides Bucharin's manner of treating questions in a general-literary, pedantic, argumentative and not in an active-revolutionary way, the reason for it is also the fact that the authors of the program, for too easily comprehensible reasons, do not at all prefer to deal more fully with the strategical lessons of the last decade.

But a program of revolutionary deed naturally should not be a bare collection of abstract assertions which bears no relation to all that has taken place in these historical years. A program cannot of course describe the events of the past, but it must proceed from these events, base itself upon them, embrace them, and relate to them. A program, by the position it takes, must make it possible to understand all the important facts of the struggle of the proletariat and the controversy in the Comintern. If this is true with regard to the program as a whole, then it is all the more so with regard to that part of it which is specifically dedicated to the questions of strategy and tactics. Here, in the words of Lenin, besides what has been *conquered* there

must also be entered what has been *lost*, which can become something "conquered" when it has been understood and assimilated. The proletarian vanguard needs no catalog of platitudes but a guide to action. We will therefore consider here the problems of the "strategic" chapter in closest connection with the experiences of the struggles of the post-war period, especially of the last five years, the years of tragic mistakes of the leadership.

2. The Characteristic Features of the Strategy of the Revolutionary Epoch And the Rôle of the Party

The chapter devoted to strategy and tactics does not so much as give a "strategical" characterization, coherent to any degree, of the imperialist epoch as an epoch of the proletarian revolution in contrast to the pre-war epoch.

At any rate, the period of industrial capitalism as a whole is described in the first chapter of the draft program as a "period of relatively constant evolution and expansion of capitalism over the whole globe in the form of the division or the armed occupation of colonial territories"

This characterization is certainly pretty contradictory and idealizes the whole epoch of industrial capitalism, which was an epoch of the great convulsions, of wars and revolutions surpassing all that preceded it. This idealization in the characterization was apparently necessary so as to be able to excuse, at least to some extent, the absurd contention of the authors that at the time of Marx and Engels "there could not yet be any talk" of the law of unequal development. It is important to detach from the whole history of industrial capitalism, which is falsely described here as a uniform evolution, a special European epoch which comprises the years 1871 to 1914 or at least to 1905. This was an epoch of the organic accumulation of contradictions which, so far as the internal class relations of Europe are concerned, almost never overstepped the bounds of legal struggle, and so far as international relations are concerned,

adjusted themselves to the framework of the armed world. That was the age of the origin, the development and the ossification of the Second International, whose progressive historical rôle completely terminated with the beginning of the imperialist war.

Politics considered as a historical factor, has always remained behind economics. Thus, while the domination of finance capital and trust monopoly, for example, already began towards the end of the nineteenth century, the new epoch of international politics which reflects this fact, first begins with the imperialist war, with the October revolution and with the founding of the Third International. The explosive character of this new epoch, with its abrupt changes of the political flow and ebb, with its constant spasmodic class struggle between Fascism and Communism, is based upon the fact that the international capitalist system has already spent itself and *as a whole* is no longer capable of reascending. This does not mean to imply that individual branches of industry and individual countries will not rise and grow any more. They will perhaps do this at an unprecedented tempo. Nevertheless, this development proceeds and will have to proceed at the expense of the development of other branches of industry and other countries. And since Europe, accustomed to world domination, with its rapid, almost uninterrupted growth in the pre-war period, now encounters more sharply than the other continents the new relation of forces, the new division of the world market and the contradictions deepened by the war, it is precisely there that the transition from the *organic epoch* to the *revolutionary epoch* was particularly precipitous.

Theoretically, of course, even a new chapter of a *general* capitalist growth in the especially powerful, ruling and leading countries is not excluded. But for this capitalism would first have to overcome enormous barriers of a class as well as of an international character. It would have to strangle the proletarian revolution for a long time, it would finally have to subjugate China, it would have to overthrow the Soviet republic, and so forth. All this,

however, is not very likely. This political possibility corresponds least of all to the political probability. Naturally, a great deal also depends upon us, that is, upon the revolutionary strategy of the Comintern. In the final analysis this question is settled by the struggle of international forces. Still, in the present epoch for which the program was created, the general capitalist development stands before insurmountable obstacles and contradictions and thrashes about itself like one possessed. And this is precisely what invests this epoch with its revolutionary, and the revolution with its permanent, character.

The revolutionary character of the epoch does not consist in the fact that it permits the carrying through of the revolution and the seizure of power at every given moment but it consists of sharp fluctuations and transitions from an immediately revolutionary situation, that is, a situation in which the Communist party could have taken power, to a victory of the Fascist or semi-Fascist counter-revolution, and from the latter to a régime of the golden mean (the "Left bloc", drawing the social democracy into the coalition, the passage of power to the party of MacDonald, and so forth) immediately thereafter to force the antagonisms to a head again and raise the question of power.

What did we have in Europe in the course of the last decade before the war? In economy — an enormous advance of productive forces under normal fluctuations of the conjuncture. In politics — a growing social democracy at the expense of liberalism and democracy with quite insignificant fluctuations. In a word, a process of a systematic accentuation of economic and political antagonisms and in this sense a rise of the prerequisites of the proletarian revolution.

What have we in Europe in the post-war period? In economy — irregular, spasmodic curtailments and extensions of production, in which despite great technical successes in single branches of industry, the pre-war level in general is not surpassed. In politics — frenzied vacillations of the political situation towards the Left and towards the Right. It is quite apparent that the sharp

changes in the political situation in the course of one to three years are not brought about through any change in the basic economic factors, but bear a purely superstructural character and thereby mark the extreme instability of the system, whose foundation is torn by irreconcilable antagonisms.

It is precisely from this source that the significance of revolutionary strategy as against tactics rises to the fullest measure. This is also the source of the new significance of the party and the party leadership.

The draft limits itself to purely formal definitions of the party (vanguard, theory of Marxism, embodiment of experiences, and so forth) which perhaps would not sound so bad in a program of the Left social democracy. Now it is completely insufficient.

In a period of growing capitalism even the best party leadership could at most accelerate the growth of a workers' party. Inversely, mistakes of the leadership could only retard this process. The objective prerequisites of a proletarian revolution matured but slowly, and the work of the party had only a preparatory character.

Now, on the contrary, every new sharp turn of the political situation to the Left puts the decision in the hands of the revolutionary party. If it misses the critical situation, the latter veers around to its opposite. Under these conditions the rôle of the party leadership acquires a decisive importance. The words of Lenin that two to three days can decide the fate of the international revolution would have been almost incomprehensible in the epoch of the Second International. In our epoch, on the contrary, these words have only too often been confirmed, and with the exception of the October, always from the negative side. Only out of these general conditions does that exceptional position become understandable which the Communist International and its leadership adopt with respect to the whole mechanics of the present historical period.

One must be clear on the fact that the initial and basic cause of the so-called "stabilization" is formed by the contradiction that exists between the general disorgani-

zation of the economic and social position of capitalist Europe and the colonial East on the one hand, and the weaknesses, unpreparedness, irresolution of the Communist parties and the gross errors of their leadership on the other.

It is not the so-called stabilization, of which it is not known whence it might have come, that checked the development of the revolutionary situation of 1918-1919, but reversely, the unutilized revolutionary situation turned into its opposite and thus gave the bourgeoisie the opportunity to fight with relative success for the stabilization. The sharpening contradictions of these "stabilization struggles" or rather, of the struggles for a further existence and development of capitalism, prepare with every one of their new stages the prerequisites of new international class convulsions, that is, of new revolutionary situations, the utilization of which depends entirely upon the proletarian party.

The rôle of the subjective factor in such a period of slow organic development can remain a fully subordinated one. Then such lukewarm proverbs arise as: "Who goes slowly gets there anyway" and "You cannot butt your head through a wall", and so forth, which, so to speak, epitomize all the tactical wisdom of an organic epoch that tolerates no "jumping over of stages". But as soon as the objective prerequisites have grown to maturity the key to the whole historical process is handed to the subjective factor, that is, the party and its revolutionary leadership. All this proceeds clearly from the discussions on the lessons of the German October, on the Anglo-Russian Committee and the Chinese revolution. In all these cases, as well as in others of lesser importance, the opportunistic tendency expressed itself in the fact that it relied solely upon the masses and completely neglected the question of a revolutionary leadership. Such an attitude, which is false in general, operates with positively annihilating effect in this epoch.

The October revolution was a result of the general relations of class forces in Russia and in the whole world, and their definite development from the process of the

imperialist war. This general declaration belongs to the ABC of Marxism. Notwithstanding that, to pose such a question as: Would we have seized power in October had not Lenin arrived in Russia at the right moment? is in absolutely no contradiction to Marxism. There is much to indicate that in such a case we would perhaps not have seized power. The resistance of the party heads—we mention here that for the most part they were the same people who still stand at the head today—was very strong even under Lenin. And without Lenin it would undoubtedly have been much stronger. The party could very easily have failed to adopt the necessary course at the right time, all the more so since the time was extremely short then. At such a moment only a few days are often decisive. The working masses did indeed press upwards from below with great valor, but without a convinced direction, leading consciously to the goal, victory would have been improbable. In the meantime, however, the bourgeoisie would have surrendered Petrograd to the Germans and after a suppression of the proletarian uprising, probably reconsolidated its power in the form of Bonapartism, through a separate peace with Germany and other measures. The entire course of events would have been different for a whole series of years.

In the German revolution of 1918, in the Hungarian revolution of 1919, in the September action of the Italian proletariat in 1920, in the German events of 1923, in the English general strike of 1926, in the Vienna uprising of 1927 and in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27—everywhere, one and the same political contradiction of the past decade, even if different in form and degree, was manifested. In an objectively ripe revolutionary situation, ripe not only with regard to the social prerequisites but not infrequently also with regard to the mood for struggle of the masses, the subjective factor, that is, a revolutionary mass party, was lacking or else this party lacked a far-sighted and courageous leadership.

Of course, the weaknesses of the Communist parties and their leadership did not perchance fall from the sky; they are rather a result of the whole past of Europe. For all that,

the Communist parties could develop at a far swifter pace in the present existing maturity of the objectively revolutionary contradictions if, of course, there existed a correct leadership on the part of the Comintern which would hasten this process of development instead of retarding it. If the contradictions in themselves constitute the main impetus of the forward movement, then the understanding of the contradictions between a generally mature revolutionary situation (despite ebb and flow) and the immaturity of the party of the proletariat now ought to constitute the main impetus of the forward movement for the Comintern, at least for its European section.

Without an extensive, general, dialectical comprehension of the present epoch as an epoch of abrupt turns, a real education of the young parties, a correct strategical leadership of class struggles, a correct application of tactics and a sharp and bold right about face at a turn of the situation, is impossible. And it is just at such a turn that two to three days often decide the destiny of the international revolution for years to come.

The chapter of the draft program devoted to strategy and tactics speaks of a struggle of the party for the proletariat in general, it speaks of a general strike, of the armed uprising in general. But it does not even mention the peculiar character and the inner rhythm of the present epoch. Without comprehending these theoretically and "feeling" them politically, a real revolutionary leadership is impossible.

That is why this chapter turned out so pedantically, so thinly, so inadequately from beginning to end.

3. The Third Congress and the Question Of the Permanent Revolution According to Lenin and According to Bucharin

Three periods can be established in the political development of Europe after the war. The first period runs

from 1917 to 1921, the second from March 1921 to October 1923, and the third, finally, from October 1923 up to the English general strike or even up to the present.

The revolutionary mass movement immediately after the war was strong enough to overthrow the bourgeoisie. Still there was no one to carry this out. The social democracy which held the leadership of the traditional organizations of the working class, exerted all its efforts to save the régime of the bourgeoisie. When we looked forward at that time to an immediate seizure of power by the proletariat, we calculated that a revolutionary party would be forged rapidly in the fire of the civil war. But the two moments did not coincide. The revolutionary wave of the post-war period ebbed before the Communist parties grew up and reached maturity in the struggle with the social democracy so as to take over the leadership of the uprising.

In March 1921, the German Communist Party undertook the attempt to avail itself of the declining wave in order to overthrow the bourgeois state with one blow. The guiding thought of the German Central Committee in this was to save the Soviet Republic (the theory of socialism in one country had not yet been proclaimed at the time). But it turned out that the determination of the leadership and the dissatisfaction of the masses are not yet enough for victory. There is required in addition a series of other prerequisites, primarily a close connection of the leadership with the masses and the confidence of the masses in the leadership. The prerequisites did not yet exist at that time.

The Third Congress of the Comintern was the signpost that stood between the first and second periods. It established the fact that the resources of the Communist parties, politically as well as organizationally, are not sufficient for the conquest of power. It raised the slogan "Into the masses", that is, the conquest of power by means of a *preceding conquest of the masses*, by getting them through daily questions and daily struggles. For the mass lives its daily life in a revolutionary epoch also, even if in a somewhat different way.

This declaration met with vehement resistance at the Congress which was kindled theoretically by Bucharin. At that time he held the viewpoint of his own and not the Marxist permanent revolution. "*Because* capitalism has exhausted itself, *therefore* the victory must be forced through continual revolutionary attacks". The position of Bucharin is always exhausted through similar syllogisms.

Naturally, I never shared the Bucharinist version of the theory of the "permanent" revolution, according to which no interruption, periods of lull, retreats, transitional demands or the like are at all possible in the revolutionary process. On the contrary, since the first October days, I always combatted this caricature of the permanent revolution.

When I, as well as Lenin, contended that a Soviet Russia is incompatible with the world of imperialism, I had in mind the great strategical curve and not its tactical windings. But in contradistinction to this Bucharin, before he went over to the opposite side, always represented a scholastic caricature of the interpretation of a continuous revolution according to Marx. Bucharin declared, in the days of his "Left Communism" that the revolution allows neither of retreats nor temporary agreements with the enemy.

After the question of the Brest Peace, in which my standpoint had nothing in common with Bucharin's, had long been liquidated, Bucharin together with the whole ultra-Left wing of the Comintern of that time advocated the line of the March days of 1921 in Germany. He had the conception that without new revolutionary eruptions, without "electrifying" the proletariat in Europe, the Soviet power is surely threatened with destruction. The consciousness that real dangers actually threaten the Soviet power did not prevent me from fighting shoulder to shoulder with Lenin at the Third World Congress against this putschistic parody of a Marxist interpretation of the permanent revolution. More than once did we declare to the impatient Leftists at the Third Congress: "Don't be in too great a hurry to save us. In that way you will only be destroyed

yourselves, and thereby also bring about our destruction. Tread very systematically the path of struggle for the masses in order, in that way, to reach the struggle for power. We need your victory, but not your readiness to fight under unfavorable conditions. We will manage to maintain ourselves in the Soviet republic with the help of the N.E.P. and even to go forward. You will still be able to come to our aid at the right time when you have gathered your forces and utilized the favorable situation."

Although these events took place after the Tenth Party Congress, which as is known forbade factions, Lenin nevertheless took the initiative at that time to become the head of a new faction for the struggle against the then very strong ultra-Leftists. In our intimate conferences, Lenin put the question for decision as to how the further struggles would have to be carried on in case the Third World Congress should concur with Bucharin's viewpoint. Our "faction" of that time did not develop further only because its opponents were already upset during the Congress.

Bucharin of course deviated to the Left of Marxism even further than the others. Already at the Third Congress and later, too, he fought against my view that the economic conjuncture in Europe would indubitably rise, while in spite of a whole series of defeats of the proletariat and in spite of an unmistakable rise of the conjuncture, he expected no decline but a new rise of revolutionary struggle. Bucharin, who held this standpoint of a scholastic permanence of the economic crisis as well as the revolution in general fought against my conception in this question for a long time until facts finally compelled him to see that he had been mistaken, at all events—as ever—after a very long interval.

At the Third and Fourth Congresses Bucharin fought against the policy of the united front and the transitional demands, proceeding from his mechanical conception of the permanence of the revolutionary process.

The struggle between these two tendencies, the synthesized, Marxist conception of the permanent character of the proletarian revolution and the scholastic parody of

4. The German Events of 1923 and the Lessons of October

The turning point that opens a new, post-Leninist period in the development of the Comintern is constituted by the German events of 1923. The occupation of the Ruhr by French troops in 1923 signified a relapse into war chaos in Europe. Although the second appearance of this disease was incomparably weaker than the first, violent revolutionary consequences had nevertheless to be expected, since it had seized the already fully debilitated organism of Germany.

The leadership of the Comintern did not consider this at the right time. And the German Communist Party continued to abide by the one-sidedly understood slogan of the Third Congress which was to have turned them off the threatening road of putschism. We have already mentioned above that in our days of abrupt turns it is most difficult for a revolutionary leadership to feel the pulse of political events at the proper moment, so as to catch every sharp swerve and to turn the helm at the right time. Such qualities of a revolutionary leadership are not acquired simply by swearing by every new circular of the Comintern. They can be acquired only by the existence of the necessary theoretical prerequisites through independent experiences and real self-criticism.

The abrupt turn from the tactics of the March days of 1921 to a systematic revolutionary work in the press, in meetings, trade unions and parliament was not easy, of course. After the crisis of this turn had been weathered, there arose the danger of the development of a directly opposite one-sidedness. The daily struggle for the masses swallows all attention. It creates its own tactical routine and diverts the eye from the strategical tasks rising out of a change in the objective situation.

In the summer of 1923, the internal position of Germany, especially in connection with the collapse of the tactic of passive resistance, was positively catastrophic. 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 it was precisely the Communist party, in whose hands lay the key, that opened the door for the bourgeoisie with this key.

Why didn't the German revolution lead to a victory? The reasons lie completely in the tactics, not in the pre-conditions. Here we have a classic example of a missed revolutionary situation. After all the German proletariat had gone through in recent years, it could be led to a decisive struggle only if it were convinced that this time the question would really be brought to a decision and that the Communist party was ready to fight and capable of achieving the victory. But the Communist party went to work only very irresolutely and belatedly. Not only the Rights, but also the Lefts, despite the fact that they fought each other very sharply, looked pretty fatalistically upon the process of revolutionary development before September-October 1923.

To investigate now, after the event, how far the conquest of power would have been "assured" with a correct policy, is something for a pedant and not for a revolutionist. I limit myself here to quoting a remarkable, even if fortuitous, testimonial relating to this from PRAVDA, which is certainly contradictory to all the other judgments of this organ:

"If in May 1924, during the stabilization of the mark and a certain consolidation of the bourgeoisie, after the passage of the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie to the nationalists, after a deep party crisis and after a heavy defeat of the proletariat, if after all this the Communists are able to rally 3,700,000 votes to themselves, then it is clear that in October 1923, during the unprecedented economic crisis, during the complete disintegration of the middle classes, during a frightful disorder in the ranks of the social democracy consequent upon the sharp contra-

dictions among the bourgeoisie itself and an unprecedented mood of struggle of the proletarian masses in the industrial centers the Communist party had the majority of the population on its side, could and should have fought, and had all the chances for success." (PRAVDA, May 25, 1924.)

And here are the words of a German delegate at the Fifth World Congress whom I do not know:

"There is not a single worker in Germany who did not know that the party should have gone into the struggle and need not have shunned it. The leaders of the C.P.G. forgot the independent rôle of the C.P.G. That was one of the main reasons for the October defeat." (PRAVDA, June 24, 1924.)

A great deal has already been said and discussed, even if not always to the point, on what took place in the leadership of the German party and the Comintern in 1923, especially during its second half. Kuusinen in particular has brought much confusion into this question; the same Kuusinen whose task in 1924-1926 consisted in proving that salvation lay only in the leadership of Zinoviev, and who, from this or that date in 1926 began to prove that the leadership of Zinoviev was ruinous. The authority required for such a responsible judgement of the situation is probably conferred upon Kuusinen by the fact that he himself in 1918 did everything that lay in his weak powers to doom the revolution of the Finnish proletariat to destruction.

The endeavor after the event to ascribe to me a solidarity with the line of Brandler has already been undertaken more than once. It is true the attempt to do this in the U.S.S.R. was made only in a masked form, for here many knew how matters really stood, but quite openly in Germany, on the contrary, for no one knew anything there. Quite accidentally, I find in my possession a fragment, which appeared in print, of the ideological struggle that was carried on at that time in our Central Committee over the question of the German revolution. In the material for the January conference, I am directly accused by the Political Bureau of a hostile distrust towards the German Central

Committee in the period *preceding* its capitulation. It says there literally: “. . . Comrade Trotsky, before leaving the session of the Central Committee [September Plenum of 1923], 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 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 by 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.*” (MATERIAL ON THE CONFERENCE OF THE R.C.P., January 1924, page 14. My emphasis. L.T.)

It makes no difference how the Central Committee members wanted to explain my warning — not the first one, moreover — it was dictated only by concern over the fate of the German revolution. Unfortunately, my fear was completely realized. In part also because the majority of the Central Committee of the leading party, according to its own admission, did not grasp at the right time that my warning corresponded very well to the “objective state of affairs”. Of course my proposal did not look towards replacing the Central Committee of Brandler by any other, for on the eve of decisive events that would have been purest adventurism. Since the summer of 1923 I demanded that a timely and resolute position be taken on the question of the armed uprising and a corresponding mobilization of forces for the support of the German Central Committee. The later attempts to ascribe to me a solidarity with the line of the Central Committee of Brandler, whose mistakes were really only a reflection of the mistakes of the Comintern leadership, were principally evoked by the fact that *after the capitulation* of the German party I stood out against making Brandler alone the scapegoat, although, or

more correctly, because I took the German defeat much more seriously than the majority of the Central Committee. Here, as in other cases too, I fought against the inadmissible system which only seeks to prove the infallibility of the central leadership by periodic removals of the national leaderships, in which the latter are exposed to a wild hounding and often even exclusion from the party.

In my *Lessons of October*, written under the impression of the capitulation of the German Central Committee, I develop the thought that in the present epoch, a revolutionary situation which one has neglected to utilize even for a few days, will return only years later. This thought — it is hard to believe it — was stamped as “Blanquism” and “individualism”.

The innumerable articles directed against the *Lessons of October* only prove how thoroughly the experiences of the October overthrow have already been forgotten, and how little its lessons have penetrated the consciousness. To want to shift responsibility for mistakes of the leaders on the masses or to disparage the importance of leadership in general, is a typical Menshevik custom. It arises out of the total incapacity to understand dialectically the “superstructure”, namely the superstructure over the class formed by the party, and the superstructure over the party, that is, its central leadership. There are periods in which even Marx and Engels would be unable to drive developments forward a single inch. But there are also periods in which people of much smaller caliber, standing at the helm, can check the development of the international revolution for a whole series of years.

The attempts undertaken recently to present the matter as though I had renounced my *Lessons of October* are entirely absurd. To be sure, I have admitted making a “mistake” of secondary importance. It appeared to me, namely, when I wrote my *Lessons of October*, that is, in the summer of 1924, that Stalin had adopted a position further to the Left — that is, Left-Centrist — than Zinoviev in the spring of 1923. I was not exactly initiated in the inner life of the group that occupied the rôle of the center, of the

apparatus faction of the majority. The documents made public after the split of this faction, especially the purely Brandlerist letter of Stalin to Zinoviev and Bucharin, convinced me that my estimation of these personal groupings, which had moreover nothing to do with the essence of the problem raised in itself, was incorrect. But even this mistake in persons is not really so great. Centrism is quite capable of single great spurts to the Left, yet, as the "evolution" of Zinoviev has again shown, it is quite incapable of observing any sort of systematic revolutionary line.

The ideas argued by me in the *Lessons of October* retain their full strength even now. Yes, even more, they receive confirmation over and over again after 1924.

Among the numerous difficulties in a proletarian revolution there is a particular, definite, specific difficulty. It arises out of the position and tasks of revolutionary party leadership. Even the most revolutionary parties run the risk of confronting the events, slogans and measures of struggle of yesterday that are being sharply precipitated, with the new tasks and requirements. And there cannot, after all, be a sharper turn of events than that required by the armed uprising. It is right here that the danger also arises that the policy of the party leadership and the party in general does not correspond to the action of the class and the requirements of the situation. During a relatively tranquil course of political life, such a contradiction can be straightened out, even though with losses, yet without a catastrophe. But at a period of violent crisis, it is precisely *time* that is lacking to eliminate this contradiction and to redress the front, so to speak, under fire. The periods of the highest accentuation of a revolutionary crisis are by their very nature always only brief. This contradiction between a revolutionary leadership (vacillations, a temporizing attitude despite the assault of the bourgeoisie) and the objective situation, can lead in the course of a few weeks and even days to a catastrophe and to a loss of what took years of work to prepare.

Of course this contradiction between the leadership and the party or the party and the class can also bear the

opposite character. That is the case when the leadership *outdistances* the development of the revolution and mistakes the fifth month of pregnancy for the ninth. A crass example of such a contradiction are the events in Germany in March 1921. There we had in the party a crass appearance of the "infantile disease of radicalism" the consequence of which were putschism (revolutionary adventurism). This danger was also timely for the future. That is why the lessons of the Third Congress of the Comintern retain their force. Only the German experience of 1923 brought before us the opposite danger in hard reality. The situation was ripe and the leadership lagged behind. By the time this contradiction was straightened out, the situation had already changed, the masses receded and the relationship of forces became fundamentally worse.

The German defeat of 1923 naturally had many national 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 a proletarian party are already 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 or 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 they are 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. In China where the workers and poor peasants were fighting for the seizure of power, *the central leadership worked against this struggle*. All these were not of course the last crises 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 purport of the *Lessons of October*.

5. The Basic Strategical Mistake of the Fifth Congress

We have, beginning with the end of 1923, a whole series of written documents of the Comintern as well as oral utterances of its leaders on the "mistake in tempo" in the spring of 1923, all of which are provided with the inevitable references to Marx, who also miscalculated in his dates. But whether the "mistake in tempo" of the Comintern consisted in an underestimation of the nearness of the critical moment of the seizure of power, has been quite deliberately concealed. In accordance with the régime of double bookkeeping that has become traditional for the leadership in recent years, the possibility for both constructions has been left open.

But it is not difficult to draw the conclusion from the whole policy of the Comintern in those days that its leadership during 1924 and the greater part of 1925 was of the opinion that the high point of the German crisis was still before us. The reference to Marx was therefore hardly in place. For while Marx, because of his farsightedness,

frequently saw the revolution closer than it was, it could never occur to him not to recognize the revolution face to face when it stood directly before him and then, later on, after the revolution had already turned its back, stubbornly to mistake this backside for the face of the revolution.

At the Thirteenth Conference of the Russian Communist Party, Zinoviev, after having coined his ambiguous formula on the "mistake in tempo", declared:

"The Executive Committee of the Comintern must say to you that at a repetition of the same events in one and the same situation, we would have to act the same way." (PRAVDA, January 25, 1924.)

This promise sounded like a threat. On February 20, 1924, Zinoviev spoke at a conference of the International Red Aid on the present situation in Europe:

"We need expect no period now, no matter how brief, of even an external pacification, any kind of extinction . . . Europe is entering into the stage of decisive events . . . Germany is apparently approaching a sharpened civil war . . ." (PRAVDA, February 2, 1924.)

At the beginning of February 1924, the Presidium of the E.C.C.I. says in its declaration on the lessons of the German events:

"The Communist Party of Germany must not expunge the question of the uprising and the seizure of power from the order of the day. This question must stand before us in all its reality and urgency . . ." (PRAVDA, February 7, 1924.)

On March 26, 1924, the E.C.C.I. wrote to the German party:

"The mistake in the evaluation of the tempo of events [what kind of a mistake? L.T.] in October 1923, brought the party many difficulties. Yet in spite of that it was *only an episode*. The fundamental estimate remains the same." (PRAVDA, April 20, 1924. My emphasis. L.T.)

From all this the E.C.C.I. draws the following conclusion:

"The German party must continue as before with all its power to arm the working class . . ." (PRAVDA,

April 19, 1924.)

The great historical drama of 1923 — the surrender without a struggle of the wonderful revolutionary position—is characterized here as only an episode. Europe is still living today from the heavy consequences of this “episode”. The fact that the Comintern did not need to convoke a Congress for four years, like the fact that the Left wing was smashed in one party of the Comintern after the other, is in the same measure also the result of this “episode” of 1923.

The Fifth Congress met eight months after the defeat of the German proletariat, when all the consequences of this catastrophe had already come clearly to light. Here it was not so very necessary to see something coming as to see that which was. The fundamental task of the Fifth Congress was first, that this defeat be clearly and relentlessly called by its name, its “subjective” causes revealed, and that no one be permitted to hide behind the objective conditions. Secondly, the Congress had to establish the beginning of a new stage during which the masses would temporarily drift with the stream, the social democracy grow and the Communist Party lose in influence. Thirdly, the task of the Congress consisted in preparing the Comintern for all this so that it would not be taken unawares and to initiate it in the necessary new methods of defensive struggle and organizational consolidation until the arrival of a new change in the situation.

But in all these questions the Congress adopted a directly opposite attitude.

Zinoviev defined the import of the German events at the Congress in the following manner:

“We expected the German revolution, but it did not come.” (PRAVDA, June 22, 1924.)

In reality, however, the revolution had the right to answer: “I did come, but you, gentlemen, appeared too late at the rendezvous.”

The Comintern leadership believed together with Brandler that they had “overestimated” the situation. In reality, they estimated it far too lightly and too late.

Zinoviev arranged matters very easily with this alleged overestimation of his. He saw the main danger in other things.

"The overestimation of the situation was not the worst. It is much worse—as the example of Saxony showed—that there are still numerous social democratic remnants left in the party." (PRAVDA, June 24, 1924.)

Zinoviev did not see the catastrophe, yet he did not stand alone in this. The whole Fifth Congress simply passed over this greatest defeat of the world revolution together with him. The German events were considered there principally from the point of view of the policy of the Communists . . . in the Saxon Landtag. In its resolution, the Congress approved the E.C.C.I. for having

"... condemned the opportunistic procedure of the German Central Committee and *in the first place* its perverted application of the united front tactic during the Saxon government experiment." (PRAVDA, June 24, 1924.)

Then after the "Saxon experiment" had been condemned and Brandler deposed, there followed a simple passing on to the order of the day.

"The general perspective," said Zinoviev, and the Congress with him, "remains fundamentally the same. The situation is pregnant with revolution. New class struggles are already in motion again. A gigantic struggle is on the march . . ." (PRAVDA, June 24, 1924.)

How fragile and unstable is such "Leftism" which regards every gnat minutely and overlooks the camels. But those who considered the situation with seeing eyes and pushed the significance of the October defeat to the foreground, those who pointed out the subsequent lengthy period of revolutionary ebb and transitory consolidation ("stabilization") of capitalism with all the political consequences arising from it, the leadership of the Fifth Congress endeavored to stamp as opportunists and liquidators of the revolution. Zinoviev and Bucharin saw their main task in this. Ruth Fischer, who together with them underestimated the defeat of the previous year, saw in the Russian Opposition *the loss of the perspective of world*

revolution, the lack of faith in the proximity of the German and European revolution, a hopeless pessimism and the liquidation of the European revolution, and so forth. (PRAVDA, June 25, 1924.)

It need not be mentioned that those who were directly guilty for the defeat railed most against the liquidators, that is, against those who did not want to characterize the defeat as a victory. Thus Kolarov stormed against Radek who had characterized the defeat of the Bulgarian party as a decisive one:

“The defeats of the party were decisive neither in June nor in September. The C.P. of Bulgaria stands firm and is preparing itself for new struggles.” (Speech of comrade Kolarov at the Fifth Congress.)

Instead of a Marxist analysis of the defeat—a bureaucratic self-adulation all along the line. A Bolshevik strategy, however, is incompatible with a self-satisfied, soulless Kolarovdom.

The work of the Fifth World Congress contained not a little of what was correct and necessary. Thus the struggle against the Right tendencies, which sought to raise their head was absolutely urgent. But this struggle was entangled and distorted by the false fundamental estimation of the situation, so that those were also counted in the camp of the Right who merely saw better and more clearly the events of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Had the Left of that time triumphed at the Third World Congress, even Lenin, together with Levi, Klara Zetkin and others would have been counted in the Right wing on the same grounds. The confusion of ideas that arose at the Fifth Congress through the false political orientation operated as a source of further great misunderstanding.

The political evaluation of the Congress was likewise carried over completely to the economic field. The symptoms of an economic consolidation of the German bourgeoisie, which were already manifest, were simply denied or ignored. Varga, who always serves up the economic situation as is required by the dominant political tendency of the moment, reported this time too that

“ . . . there is no perspective of the restoration of capitalism.” (PRAVDA, June 28, 1924.)

But during the year, when the restoration was *belatedly* rechristened “stabilization”, it was cautiously discovered by Varga after the event. The Opposition was then already accused of not recognizing the stabilization, for it had dared to establish the commencement of it a year and a half before, and already perceived in 1925 tendencies that undermine this stabilization. (*Whither England?*)

The Fifth Congress saw political events and political groupings only in the distorted mirror of a false orientation. This condition also sprang from its resolution which characterized the Russian Opposition as a “petty-bourgeois deviation”. History corrected this mistake in its own way by forcing Zinoviev, the main prosecutor at the Fifth Congress, to admit two years later that the kernel of the Opposition had been correct in all the fundamental disputes.

The basic strategical mistake of the Fifth Congress necessarily had also to arise out of a lack of understanding of the processes developing within the German and the international social democracy. At the Congress only its decline, decay and collapse were spoken of.

Zinoviev said the following with regard to the last Reichstag elections which yielded 3,700,000 votes for the Communist Party of Germany:

“If on the field of parliamentarism in Germany we have a proportion of 62 Communists to 100 social democrats, it must be proof to every one that we are *approaching the conquest* of the majority of the German working class.” (PRAVDA, June 22, 1924.)

Zinoviev understood nothing of the dynamics of this process. The influence of the C.P.G. in that and the following years did not grow, but fell constantly. The 3,700,000 votes represented only an impressive remnant of the influence that the party had over the majority of the German proletariat towards the end of 1923. This number undoubtedly had to fall in the subsequent elections.

In the meantime, the social democracy, which went to pieces in 1923 like a rotted truss of straw, began to recover

after the defeat of the revolution at the end of 1923, to start up and to grow, and what is more, chiefly at the expense of the Communists.

The fact that we had foreseen this—and how could this have been overlooked—was put down as the expression of our “pessimism”. Is it necessary now, after the last May elections in which the social democrats received more than 9,000,000 votes, still to prove that we were correct when at the beginning of 1924 we said and also wrote that in a certain period a rebirth of the social democracy must unfailingly take place, while the “optimists”, who had already read the mass for the dead over the social democracy, were grievously mistaken? Above all, the Fifth Congress of the Comintern was also grievously mistaken.

The second youth of the social democracy is naturally not lasting. The collapse of the social democracy is inevitable, yet the period up to its fall is uncertain. It does not depend upon us. To shorten this period, one must first of all know how to look facts in the eye, to recognize at the proper time the turn of the political situation, to characterize defeats as defeats and to learn to foresee the coming day.

If the German social democracy still represents a force of many millions today, derived right from the working class, then there are two direct causes for it. First, the defeat of the German party in the fall of 1923 and second, the false strategical orientation of the Fifth Congress.

If in the beginning of 1924 the relation between the Communists and the social democrats at the elections was almost 2 to 3, this relation grew worse after four months so that it became little more than 1 to 3. So that, taken as a whole, we did not draw closer in this period to the conquest of the majority of the working class, but drew further away from it. And that in spite of an indubitable strengthening of our party in recent years, which with a correct policy can and must become the point of departure for a real conquest of the majority.

We will yet return later on to the political consequences of the position taken by the Fifth Congress. Still,

is it not already clear now that a Bolshevik strategy cannot be spoken of seriously if one does not understand the basic curve of our epoch in its entirety as well as in its individual windings, which have the same significance at particular moments for the party leadership as railway curves have for the locomotive engineer? To put on full steam on a sharp railway curve absolutely means to fall down the slope.

Despite all that, it is only a few months ago that PRAVDA had to acknowledge with more or less distinctness the correctness of the estimate I already gave towards the end of 1923. On January 28, 1928, PRAVDA wrote:

“The wave of a certain apathy and oppressiveness which set in after the defeat of 1923 and permitted German capital to strengthen its position, is beginning to pass.”

So the “certain” oppressiveness, which held sway since the fall of 1923, is first beginning to pass in 1928. These words, which have come to light after a delay of four years, constitute a clumsy condemnation of the false orientation supplied by the Fifth Congress, but at the same time also of that system of leadership which does not reveal and examine the errors committed but veils them and thereby only increases the ideological confusion.

A draft program which brings no evaluation of the events of 1923 and the basic mistake of the Fifth Congress, simply turns its back on the real questions of a revolutionary strategy of the proletariat in the imperialist epoch.

6. The “Democratic-Pacifist” Era and Fascism

The capitulation of German Communism in the fall of 1923, which removed the threatening proletarian danger with a minimum of civil war, inevitably had to weaken the position not only of the Communist party but also of Fascism. For even a civil war in which the bourgeoisie is victorious undermines the foundations of capitalist exploitation. Already at that time, that is, at the end of 1923, we

came forward against the overestimation of the strength and the danger of German Fascism. We declared that Fascism would always remain only in the back-yards when the political scenery of all Europe is occupied for a certain period by the democratic-pacifist groupings, (the Left bloc in France, the Labor government in England). And the strengthening of these groupings in turn would again give an impetus for a new growth of the social democracy. Instead of understanding this inevitable process and organizing the struggle against it in a new front line, the official leadership continued to throw Fascism and the social democracy into one pot and to prophecy their joint collapse in an imminent civil war.

The problem of the mutual relations between the United States and Europe was very intimately bound up with the question of Fascism and the social democracy. Only the defeat of the German revolution in 1923 made it possible for American capital to begin with the realization of its plans for the (momentarily) peaceful subjugation of Europe. Under these circumstances, the American problem should have been considered in its full magnitude. Instead, the leadership of the Fifth Congress simply passed it by. It proceeded entirely from the inner-European situation and did not even notice that the long postponement of the European revolution had immediately shifted the center of gravity of international relations towards the side of an American offensive upon Europe. This offensive assumed the form of an economic "consolidation" of Europe, its normalization and pacification, and a "restoration" of democratic action in Europe. Not only the impoverished petty bourgeoisie but even the simple worker said to himself: Since the Communist party did not understand how to achieve victory, then the social democracy will bring us — not victory, it is true; no, we don't expect that of it—but a piece of bread through a revival of industry with the aid of American gold. It must be understood that the bare-faced fiction of American pacifism on the basis of the dollar — after the defeat of the German revolution — had to become one of the most important factors in the life of

Europe. Not only did the German social democracy rise again out of this leaven, but to a great extent also the French Radicals and the English Labor Party.

As a counterpoise to this new hostile front, it should have been pointed out that bourgeois Europe will be able to maintain itself only as a financial vassal of the United States and that the pacifism of the latter only springs from the endeavor to put Europe on hunger rations. Instead of making this perspective the point of departure of the new struggle against the social democracy, with its new religion of Americanism, the leadership of the Comintern directed its attack against the opposite side. It imputed to us the idiotic theory of a normalized imperialism, put on American rations, without wars and revolutions.

In the very same February sessions, in which the Præsidium of the E.C.C.I.—four months before the Congress declared that the armed uprising “stood concretely and urgently” on the order of the day for the German party, it also gave the following estimation of the situation in France, which was just at that time approaching the “Left” parliamentary elections:

“This revival (before the elections) always affects only the most insignificant and weakest parties and *dead political groupings*. The socialist party has been aroused and came back to life under the rays of the approaching elections . . . ” (PRAVDA, February 7, 1924.)

Thus at a time in which a wave of petty bourgeois pacifist Leftism was quite obviously approaching in France, which also embraced broad sections of the workers and weakened the party of the proletariat as well as the Fascist guard of capital, in a word, the victory of the “Left bloc”, the leadership of the Comintern proceeded from a directly opposite perspective. It flatly denied the possibility of a pacifist wave and on the eve of the May 1924 elections spoke of the French socialist party, the Left banner-bearer of petty bourgeois pacifism, as an already “dead political grouping”. At that time I protested against the light-minded estimation of the social patriotic

party in a special letter to the delegation of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. But all in vain. The leadership of the Comintern considered the stubborn disregard of these facts as "Leftism". From this arose that distorted and sordid polemic — as always in recent years — over democratic pacifism, which brought so much confusion into the parties of the Comintern. The supporters of the Opposition were accused of pacifist prejudices only because they did not share the prejudices of the leadership of the Comintern and foresaw at the right time that the defeat without a struggle of the German proletariat, after a brief strengthening of the Fascist tendencies, would inevitably bring the petty bourgeois parties on the scene and strengthen the social democracy.

We have already mentioned above that Zinoviev, at a conference of the International Red Aid about three or four months before the victory of the Labor Party in England and the Left bloc in France, declared in a polemic against me :

"We need expect no period now, no matter how brief, of even an external pacification, any kind of extinction . . . Europe is entering into the stage of decisive events . . . Germany is apparently approaching a sharpened civil war . . ." (PRAVDA, February 2, 1924).

Zinoviev, to all appearances, had completely forgotten that at the Fourth Congress in 1922 I was still successful, despite a pretty stubborn resistance by Zinoviev himself and Bucharin, in introducing at a commission an amendment (rather curtailed, it is true) to the resolution of the Congress which speaks of the impending approach of a "pacifist-democratic" era as a probable stage on the road of the political decline of the bourgeois state and as a first step to the rule of Communism or Fascism.

At the Fifth Congress, which already met after the rise of the "Left" governments in England and France, Zinoviev recollected — very advantageously — this amendment of mine and announced it as follows:

"At the present moment the international situation is characterized by Fascism, by the state of siege and by a

rising wave of the white terror against the proletariat. But this does not exclude the possibility that in the near future the open reaction of the bourgeoisie will be replaced in the most important countries by a democratic-pacifist era."

To this quotation, Zinoviev added with gratification :

"This was said in 1922. Thus the Comintern, already a year and a half ago, predicted a democratic-pacifist era." (PRAVDA, June 22, 1924.)

What is right remains right. The prognosis with which I was reproached so long as a "pacifist" deviation (as my deviation and not a deviation in development) now came in very handy at the Fifth Congress during the honeymoon of the MacDonald and Herriot ministries. That is how the matter unfortunately stood with prognoses in general.

Here it must still be added that Zinoviev and the majority of the Fifth Congress construed the old perspective of the "pacifist-democratic" era as a stage on the road of capitalist decay much too literally. Thus Zinoviev declared at the Fifth Congress:

"The democratic-pacifist era—that is a symptom of the decay of capitalism."

And in his conclusion he said again:

"I repeat that precisely the democratic-pacifist era is a sign of the decay and the incurable crisis [of capitalism]." (PRAVDA, June 1, 1924.)

This would have been correct had there been no Ruhr crisis and if evolution proceeded more planfully, without such historical "leaps". This would have been doubly and trebly correct had the German proletariat achieved the victory in 1923. In that case, the régimes of MacDonald and Herriot would only have meant an English and French "Kerensky period". But the Ruhr crisis did come and most acutely posed the question of who should be master in the house. The German proletariat did not achieve the victory, but suffered a decisive defeat and that in a form which was bound to rouse and consolidate the German bourgeoisie to the highest degree. Faith in the revolution

was shattered throughout Europe for a whole series of years, In such a situation the governments of MacDonald and Herriot by no means signified a Kerensky period or generally the decay of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, they were able and had to become merely the transient precursors of more serious, firmer and more self-convinced bourgeois governments.

The Fifth Congress did not grasp this and by falsely estimating the extent of the German catastrophe and making it merely a question of the comedy in the Saxon Landtag, it did not clarify for itself the fact that the proletariat of Europe already found itself in a political retreat all along the front, and that our task now consisted not in an armed uprising but in a new orientation, in rear-guard engagements and in the creation of organizational positions for the party primarily in the trade unions.

In connection with the question of the "era" there arose a no less one-sided and distorted polemic over Fascism. The Opposition had already then set forth that the bourgeoisie advances its Fascist shoulder only at the moment an immediate revolutionary danger threatens the foundations of the régime itself and when the normal organs of the bourgeois state prove themselves insufficient. In this sense active Fascism signifies the condition of civil war on the part of capitalist society facing the rebelling proletariat. Contrariwise, the bourgeoisie is forced to advance its Left, the social democratic, shoulder in a period that precedes the time of the civil war, so as to deceive the proletariat, to pacify and disintegrate it, or in a period following upon a serious and lasting victory over the proletariat. That is, when it is forced to lay hold of the broad masses of the people parliamentarily, among them also the workers disappointed by the revolution, in order to re-establish the normal régime. In opposition to this analysis, which is in no way to be refuted theoretically and which was confirmed by the whole course of the struggle, the leadership of the Comintern set up the senseless, simplified contention of the identity of the social democracy with Fascism. Proceeding from the incontestable fact that

the social democracy has no less servility towards the foundations of bourgeois society than Fascism and is always ready to send forward its Noske at the moment of danger, the leadership of the Comintern entirely expunged the political difference between the social democracy and Fascism, but with that also the difference between a period of open civil war and the period of the "normalization" of the class struggle. In a word, everything was turned on its head, entangled and muddled up, only in order to maintain the sham of an orientation upon the immediate development of the civil war. Just as though nothing in particular had happened in Germany and Europe in the fall of 1923; an episode—and that was all.

In order to show the course and the level of this polemic we must quote from the article by Stalin *On the International Situation* (PRAVDA, September 20, 1924).

"Many believe," so Stalin polemicized against me, "that the bourgeoisie was not compelled to come to 'pacifism' and 'democracy', but came of its free will, of free choice, so to speak."

After this historico-philosophical basic thesis, which it is positively embarrassing to dwell upon, two principal conclusions are drawn:

"Firstly, it is improbable that Fascism is only a combat organization of the bourgeoisie. Fascism is not merely a military-technical category [?]."

Why the combat organization of bourgeois society is a technical and not a political "category" is incomprehensible. Yet what is Fascism, after all? An indirect answer to that reads:

"The social democracy is an objectively more moderate wing of Fascism."

It might well be said that the social democracy is the Left wing of bourgeois society. This declaration is quite correct if one does not construe it quite so simply and thereby forgets that the social democracy still leads millions of workers behind it, and within definite limits is forced to reckon not only with the will of its bourgeois master but

also with the interests of its deluded proletarian mandatories. But it is absolutely senseless to characterize the social democracy as the "more moderate wing of Fascism". Where should bourgeois society itself be put with such a hypothesis? Even in the simplest political orientation one should not throw everything in one heap, but one must discern that the social democracy and Fascism present two distinct poles of the—*at the moment of danger united*—bourgeois front, but nevertheless two poles. Is it after all still necessary to emphasize this now, after the May 1928 elections, characterized by the simultaneous decline of Fascism and the growth of the social democracy? Be it further observed that it was the Communist party in this case, too, that proposed a united front of the working class to the social democracy.

"Secondly," it says further on in the article by Stalin, "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. Decisive struggles have not yet taken place at all, if only because there has not yet been a real Bolshevik mass party."

So, the bourgeoisie could not grow stronger because there were no struggles as yet, and there were no struggles "if only" because there was not yet a Bolshevik party. Hence the consolidation of the bourgeoisie is prevented . . . by the lack of a Bolshevik party. In reality, however, it was just the lack—not so much of the party as of a Bolshevik leadership—that helped the bourgeoisie to consolidate itself. When an army capitulates before the enemy in a critical situation without parrying a blow, that takes the place—completely—of a "decisive battle", in politics as in war. Back in 1850 Engels taught that a party which has missed a revolutionary situation disappears from the scene for a long time. Yet who is still unaware that Engels, who lived "before imperialism", is obsolete today? Stalin writes as follows:

"Without such [Bolshevik] parties no struggles for the dictatorship are possible under the conditions of

imperialism.”

It must therefore be assumed that such struggles were quite possible in the epoch of Engels, when the law of unequal development had not yet been discovered.

This whole chain of thought is crowned, as is customary, by a political prognosis:

“Finally, it is also false . . . that out of this ‘pacifism’ there must result a strengthening of the power of the bourgeoisie and a postponement of the revolution for an indefinite time.”

But for all that such a postponement did result—according to Stalin, it is true, but according to Engels. A year later, when it became clear even for the blind, that the position of the bourgeoisie had become stronger and that the revolution was adjourned for an indefinite time, Stalin began to accuse me of—not admitting the stabilization. The accusations became especially strong at the time when the “stabilization” already began to crack anew, when a new revolutionary wave drew near in England and China. And all this hopeless muddle was supposed to fulfill the obligations of a leading line! It must still be observed that the characterization of Fascism and its relations to the social democracy contained in the draft (Chapter 2), despite the ambiguities deliberately introduced (so as to tie it up with the past), is far more rational and correct than the schema of Stalin quoted above, which in turn is essentially only a schema of the Fifth Congress. Still, this insignificant step forward does not yet settle the question. The program of the Comintern, after the experiences of the last decade, will not suffice without a characterization of the revolutionary situation, its origin and disappearance, without pointing out the classic mistakes in the estimation of the situation, without an explanation of how the locomotive engineer must act at the curves, and without hammering into the parties the truth that there can be situations in which the success of the world revolution depends upon a struggle of two to three days.

7. The Right Dregs of Ultra-Left Policy

After the period of high tide in 1923 began the period of a long-lasting ebb. In the language of strategy this meant an orderly retreat, rearguard battles, strengthening of the position within the mass organizations, reinspection of one's own ranks and the cleansing and sharpening of the theoretical and political weapons. But the adoption of this attitude was designated as liquidatory. With this, as in general with the other ideas of the Bolshevik lexicon in late years, the very greatest abuse was practised. They no longer taught and trained, but only sowed discord and confusion. Liquidationism signifies a renunciation of the revolution and endeavors to substitute the roads and methods of reformism for the roads and methods of revolution. The policy of Lenin had nothing in common with liquidationism. Yet it had just as little to do with a disregard of the changes in the objective situation, or with the maintenance of the course of armed uprising by mere words at a time when the revolution had already turned its back upon us, and a long road full of stubborn, systematic, laborious work among the masses to prepare the party for a new revolution lay before us.

When a man ascends the stairs he needs one kind of motion, but when he descends it—another. Most dangerous is such a situation in which a man puts out the light and raises his foot to ascend when there are three downward steps before him. A crash, injuries and dislocations are unavoidable. The leadership of the Comintern in 1924 did everything to suppress a criticism of the experiences of the German October, like all criticism in general. It repeated stubbornly: The workers are immediately approaching the revolution—the stairs lead upward. Is it then astonishing that the directives of the Fifth Congress applied in the revolutionary ebb were bound to lead to heavy political crashes and dislocations?

In No. 5-6 of the *Information Bulletin* of the German Opposition, March 1, 1927, it says:

“The greatest mistakes of the Lefts at the Frankfurt Congress in the spring of 1924, when they took over the leadership, consisted in *not speaking relentlessly enough to the party of the seriousness of the defeat of 1923; in not drawing the necessary deductions, in not showing the party, soberly and unembellished, the tendencies of relative stabilization of capitalism and indicating a corresponding program for the impending period with its struggles and slogans.* This would surely have been possible, just as well as a correct and absolutely necessary sharp emphasis upon the individual program demands.” (My emphasis. L.T.)

These lines showed us already at that time that a part of the German Left, who participated during the Fifth Congress in the struggle against our fictitious “liquidationism”, seriously understood the lessons of 1924-25. That made possible a further approach on the basis of principle.

The main year of the turn was the year 1924. Nevertheless the recognition of this ensuing abrupt turn (“stabilization”) followed only a year and a half later. What is astonishing here, since the years 1924-25 were filled with Left mistakes and putschist experiments? The Bulgarian terrorist adventure, like the tragic history of the Esthonian armed uprising of 1924, constituted an outbreak of despair evoked by the false orientation. The fact that these attempts to force the historical process by means of a putsch remained without a critical investigation led to a relapse in Canton towards the end of 1927. In politics not even the smallest mistakes pass unpunished, much less the big ones. And the greatest mistake of them all is when the mistake is veiled, when one seeks mechanically to suppress criticism and a correct Marxist estimate of the mistake.

We are not writing a history of the Comintern for the last five years. We bring here only a factual illumination of two strategical lines in the fundamental stages of this period — an illumination of the hollowness of the draft program for which all these questions do not even exist.

We cannot therefore give here a description, however general, of the inextricable situation into which the parties of the Comintern, placed between the directives of the Fifth Congress on the one hand and political reality on the other, constantly landed. Of course, not everywhere were the contradictions solved by such fatal convulsions as was the case in Bulgaria and Esthonia in 1924. Yet always and everywhere the parties felt themselves bound, gave no echo to the demands of the masses, went about with eye-flaps and stumbled. In the purely party propoganda and agitation, in the work in the trade unions, on the parliamentary tribune — everywhere the Communists had to drag the decisions of the Fifth Congress behind them like a heavy chain. Every single party, one more, the other less, became a victim of the false points of departure. They chased after phantoms, completely ignored the real process, transformed revolutionary slogans into howling phrases, compromised themselves in the eyes of the masses and lost all the ground under their feet. To crown all this, the press of the Comintern was deprived of every possibility, then as well as now, of assembling, arranging and publishing facts and figures on the work of the Communist parties in recent years. The leadership of epigones, after the defeats, mistakes and failures, preferred to carry out the retreat and the reckoning with the lights turned out.

Finding itself in a great and growing contradiction with real factors, the leadership had to cling ever more to fictitious factors. The E.C.C.I. lost the ground under its feet and constantly labored to discover revolutionary forces and signs where there were none. To keep its balance it had to cling to rotten ropes.

In the same measure that an obvious, growing swing to the Right was going on in the proletariat, there began in the Comintern the line of the idealizing of the peasantry, a wholly uncritical exaggeration of every symptom of its "break" with bourgeois society, an embellishment of every possible peasant pseudo-organization and a downright coddling of "peasant" demagogues.

The *problem* of a long and stubborn struggle of the

proletarian vanguard against the bourgeoisie and peasant demagoguery for influence upon the most disenfranchised village poor, was always more and more displaced by the hope for a direct and independent revolutionary rôle of the peasantry on a national as well as on an international scale.

In the course of the whole year of 1924, that is, the main year of the "stabilization", the Communist press was constantly filled with completely fantastic information on the strength of the lately founded Peasants' International. Dombal, the representative of the latter, declared that the Peasants' International, six months after its formation, already embraced a few million members.

There was enacted the scandalous incident of the leader of the Croatian "Peasants" Party, Raditch, who considered it advisable to show himself in Red Moscow on the road from Green Agram in order thereby to strengthen his ministerial chances in White Belgrade. On July 9, 1924, Zinoviev, in his report to the Leningrad party workers on the results of the Fifth Congress, told of a new "victory":

"At this moment an important turn is taking place within the peasantry. You have all surely heard already of the Croatian Peasants' Party of Raditch. Raditch is now in Moscow. There — is a real people's leader . . . Behind Raditch stands united the entire poor and middle peasantry of Croatia . . . Raditch has now decided in the name of his party to join the Peasants' International. We consider this event very important . . . The formation of the Peasants' International is an extraordinarily great event. Some comrades did not believe that a big organization would grow out of it . . . Now we are getting a great auxiliary machine—the peasantry . . ." (PRAVDA, July 28, 1924.)

And so forth and more of the same.

The leader, LaFollette, corresponded on the other side of the ocean to the "genuine people's leader", Raditch. The representative of the Comintern, Pepper, in order to set "the auxiliary machine"—the American farmers—into motion at an accelerated tempo, drew the young and weak American Communist Party into the senseless and shameless adventure of creating a "farmer-labor party"

around LaFollette so that American capitalism might be overthrown in the quickest way.

The glad tidings of the nearness of the revolution in the United States on the foundation of the farmers filled the speeches and articles of the official leaders of the E.C.C.I. at that time. In the sessions of the Fifth Congress, Kolarov reported:

"In the United States the small farmers have created a farmer-labor party, which is becoming ever more radicalized, draws close to the Communists, and is being permeated by the idea of the creation of a workers' and peasants' government in the United States." (PRAVDA, July 6, 1924.)

So, neither more nor less.

From Nebraska came Green — one of the leaders of the LaFollette organization — to the peasants' congress in Moscow. For some reason or other he also "joined", in order, as is customary, to help along later on at a conference in St. Paul to strangle the Communist party when it made the weak attempt to go over to the realization of Pepper's great plans. The same Pepper who was counsellor to Count Karolyi and who put on an extremely Left air at the Third Congress as a reformer of Marxism. The same Pepper who was one of those that butchered the revolution in Hungary.

PRAVDA of August 29, 1924 complained:

"The American proletariat as a whole has not even risen to the consciousness of the need for even so conciliatory a party as the English Labor Party is."

And about a month and a half before that, Zinoviev reported to the Leningrad party workers:

"A few million farmers are being voluntarily or involuntarily pushed by the agrarian crisis all at once [!] to the working class. (PRAVDA, July 22, 1924.)"

And Kolarov immediately added: "to a workers' and peasants' government".

The press spoke continuously about the impending formation of a farmer-labor party in the United States for the overthrow of capital, "on a not purely proletarian,

but a class" foundation. What the "not proletarian, but class" character was supposed to mean, no sage either on this or the other side of the ocean could point out. In the long run it was only a Pepperized edition of the idea of a "joint workers' and peasants' party", on which we will yet have occasion to speak in greater detail in connection with the lessons of the Chinese revolution. Here it is enough to establish that this reactionary idea of non-proletarian but class parties arose entirely from the pseudo-Left policy of 1924, which, when it lost the ground from under its feet, clung to Raditch, LaFollette and the inflated figures of the Peasants' International.

"We are now witnesses,"—proclaimed the academician of commonplaces, Miliutin — "to an extraordinarily important and significant example of the splitting away of the peasant masses from the bourgeoisie, the coming forth of the peasantry and the working class in the capitalist countries in struggle against the capitalist system." (PRAVDA, July 27, 1924.)

In the course of the whole year of 1924, the press of the Comintern did not tire of telling about the general "Leftward trend of the peasant masses", as though something independent could be expected from this, in most cases only apparently Leftward trend of the peasants in a period of the open Rightward trend of the workers, the strengthening of the social democracy and the consolidation of the bourgeoisie.

We encounter the same mistake in political vision towards the end of 1927 and the beginning of 1928 with regard to China. After every great and deep crisis, in which the proletariat suffers a decisive defeat for a long time, the agitation still continues for a long time among the semi-proletarian masses in city and country, like the circles in the water when a stone has fallen in. So that when the leadership ascribes an independent significance to these circles and, contrary to the process within the working class, points to them as a symptom of an approaching revolution, we know that this is an infallible sign that the leadership is once more courting adventures, as was the case

in Esthonia or Bulgaria in 1924 or Canton in 1927.

During the same period of ultra-Leftism, the Chinese Communist Party was driven for several years into the Kuo Min Tang, characterized by the Fifth Congress as a "friendly party" (PRAVDA, July 25, 1924), without having made a serious attempt to examine into its class character. The further the idealizing of the "national revolutionary bourgeoisie" developed the greater it became. That is how the false Left course, with its eyes shut and burning with impatience, laid the foundation for the subsequent opportunism with regard to the East also. To give form to opportunism, they called upon Martinov, who was an all the more loyal counsellor of the Chinese proletariat for having himself limped behind the petty bourgeoisie during the three Russian revolutions.

In the hunt after an artificial acceleration of the periods, not only Raditch, LaFollette, the mythical peasant millions of Dombal and even Pepper were clung to; a basically false perspective was also built up for England. The weaknesses of the English Communist Party gave birth at that time to the necessity of replacing it as quickly as possible with a more imposing factor. At that time arose the false estimate of the tendency of English trade unionism. Zinoviev gave us to understand that he counted upon the revolution finding an entrance, not through the narrow portals of the British Communist Party, but through the broad gateway of the trade unions. The struggle of the Communist Party for the masses organized in the trade unions was replaced by the hope for the swiftest possible utilization of the ready-made apparatus of the trade unions for the purposes of the revolution. Out of this false position also sprang the later policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee, which, after the defeat in China, dealt us the second heaviest blow, a blow against the Soviet Union as well as against the English working class.

Already in the *Lessons of October*, written in the summer of 1923, the idea of an accelerated road—an accelerated road through friendship with Purcell and Cook, as the further development of this idea showed—is rejected

as follows:

“Without the party, independently of the party, in an evasion of the party, through a substitute for the party, the proletarian revolution can never triumph. That is the principal lesson of the last decade. It is true that the English trade unions can become a powerful lever for the proletarian revolution. They can, for example, under certain conditions and at a certain period, even replace the workers’ Soviets. Yet they can never play such a rôle without the Communist party and certainly not against it, but only under the condition that Communist influence in the trade unions becomes decisive. For this lesson and conclusion—with regard to the rôle and significance of the party for the proletarian revolution—we have had to pay too dearly to be able to renounce it lightly or even to have it weakened.” (Trotsky, Volume 3, page 9.)

The same problem is dealt with in even greater detail in the book *Whither England?* This book, from its very first page, is devoted to the presentation of the idea that even the English revolution cannot avoid the portals of Communism, and that with a correct, courageous and intransigent policy which steers clear of any illusions with regard to circuitous routes, the English Communist Party can grow by leaps and bounds and mature so as to be equal in the course of a few years to the tasks before it.

The Left illusions of 1924 were forced up with the aid of a Right leaven. So as to be able to conceal the significance of the mistakes and defeats of 1923 from others as well as from oneself, the progress of the Right swing that was taking place in the proletariat had to be denied and revolutionary processes within the other classes optimistically exaggerated. That was the beginning of the down-sliding from the proletarian to the Centrist, that is, to the petty bourgeois line which, in the course of the further developing stabilization, had to liberate itself from its ultra-Left shell and be revealed as a crude conciliatory line, in the U.S.S.R., in China, in England, in Germany and everywhere else.

8. The Period of Right-Centrist Down-Sliding

The policy of the most important Communist parties, decided upon at the Fifth Congress, very soon showed itself to be completely inadequate. The mistakes of the specious "Leftism" which hampered the development of the Communist parties, later gave the impetus to new empirical zig-zag deviations, to an accelerated sliding down to the Right. When people are burned by hot milk, they begin to blow cold on water too. The "Left" Central Committees of a whole series of parties were just as violently overthrown as they had been constituted before the Fifth Congress. The adventurist Leftism gave way to an open opportunism of the Right-Centrist type. To comprehend the character and the tempo of this organizational Rightward swing, it must be recalled that Stalin, the leader of this turn, back in September 1924 characterized the passing of party leadership to Maslow, Ruth Fischer, Treint, Suzanne Girault and others, as the expression of the Bolshevization of the parties and an answer to the demands of the Bolshevik workers who, on their way to the revolution, "want to have revolutionary leaders" too.

Stalin wrote, ". . . the last half year is noteworthy in the respect that it brought a fundamental reversal in the life of the Communist parties of the West, in the sense that the social democratic remnants were decisively liquidated, the party cadres Bolshevized and an isolation of the opportunist elements took place." (PRAVDA, September 20, 1924.)

But only ten months later the genuine "Bolsheviks" and "revolutionary leaders" were declared social democrats and renegades, ousted from party leadership and thrown out of the party.

Despite the panicky character of this amputation of leaders, frequently by rude and disloyal mechanical means of the apparatus, no exact ideological dividing line can be drawn between the ultra-Left policy and the period of opportunist down-sliding that followed it.

In the questions of the industry and agriculture of the U.S.S.R., of the colonial bourgeoisie, of the "peasant" parties in the capitalist countries, of socialism in one country, of the rôle of the party in the proletarian revolution, the revisionist tendencies already appeared in fullest bloom in 1924-25. They cloaked themselves with the banner of the struggle against "Trotskyism" and found their most distinctly opportunist expression in the resolutions of the April 1925 conference of the C.P.S.U.

Taken as a whole, the course to the Right presents the attempt at a half-blind, purely empirical and belated adaptation to the retardation of revolutionary development caused by the defeat of 1923. The original attitude of Bucharin, as has already been mentioned, was based on the "permanent" development of the revolution, and that in the literal, purely mechanical conception of the word. Bucharin granted no "breathing spaces", interruptions or retreats of any kind and considered it a revolutionary duty to continue the "offensive" under all circumstances.

In the above quoted article—programmatical in type—of Stalin, *On the International Situation*, which constitutes the very first appearance of Stalin on international questions, we are shown that the second author of the draft program also professed the very same purely mechanical "Left" conception in the very first period of the struggle against "Trotskyism". For this conception, only a "disintegration" of the social democracy, a "Leftward turn" of the workers, a "growth" of the Communist parties and an "approach" of the revolution, existed always and unalterably. But he who could look about himself and distinguish things was and is a "liquidator". This new "tendency" required a year and a half to observe something new after the change in the situation in Europe in 1923 so as then to transform itself, panic-stricken, into its opposite. The leadership orientated itself, without any synthetic understanding of our epoch and its inner tendencies, only according to feelings (Stalin) and each time filled the fragmentary conclusions thus obtained with scholastic schemes (Bucharin). The political line as a whole,

therefore, forms a chain of zig-zags, the ideological bond, a kaleidoscope of schemata that lead every fragment of the Stalinist zig-zag to absurdity.

The Sixth Congress would act correctly if it decided to elect a special commission which would have the task to gather all those theories created by Bucharin, for instance, only for motivating the various stages of the Anglo-Russian Committee. The commission would have to put these theories together chronologically and bring them into a system so as to attempt to draw a malarial curve of the ideas contained in them. It would become one of the most instructive strategical diagrams. The same also holds for the Chinese revolution, the economic development of the U.S.S.R. and also every less important question. *Blind empiricism multiplied by scholasticism*, that is the course that still awaits its condemnation. The effects of this course showed themselves most fatally in the three most important questions: In the internal policy of the U.S.S.R., in the Chinese revolution and in the question of the Anglo-Russian Committee. In the same direction, even if not so obvious and less fatal with regard to consequences, this course of the Comintern was also reflected in all other political questions.

So far as the internal questions of the U.S.S.R. are concerned, a sufficiently detailed characterization of the policy of down-sliding is given in the *Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition)**. We must limit ourselves here to a reference to this *Platform*. The *Platform*, however, now receives an apparently unexpected confirmation by the fact that all the attempts of the present leadership of the C.P.S.U. to free itself from the consequences of the policy of the years 1923 to 1928 are based upon almost literal quotations from this *Platform* whose authors and adherents are dispersed in prisons and exile. The fact, however, that the present leadership has recourse to the *Platform* only in sections and particles, without connecting

* Published in "The Real Situation in Russia" by Leon Trotsky. Harcourt Brace and Co., New York, 1928.

one end with the other, makes the new Left turn extremely unsteady and hopeless, but at the same time gives the *Platform*, as the generalized expression of a real Leninist course, an all the greater value.

In the *Platform*, the question of the Chinese revolution is dealt with insufficiently, not concretely and in part positively falsely (Zinoviev). In consideration of the decisive importance of this question for the Comintern we are obliged to subject it to a more detailed investigation in a special section (III)*.

So far as the Anglo-Russian Committee is concerned, the third most important question from the strategical experiences of the Comintern in the last years, there only remains for us, after all that has already been said by the Opposition in a series of articles, speeches and theses, to sum up the results here briefly.

The point of departure of the Anglo-Russian Committee, as we have already seen, lay in the impatient endeavor to leap over the young and too slowly developing Communist party. This circumstance gave the whole experiment a false character even before the general strike.

The Anglo-Russian Committee was perceived not as just a purely episodic bloc of leaders that would inevitably have to be and would be demonstratively broken at the first serious test in order to compromise the General Council. No, not only Stalin, Bucharin, Tomskey and others, but also Zinoviev saw in it a long lasting "friendship", an instrument for the systematic revolutionization of the English working masses, and if not the gate, at least the threshold of the gate over which the revolution of the English proletariat would stride. The further it went, the more the Anglo-Russian Committee became transformed from an episodic understanding into an inviolable principle that stood above the real class struggle. That became obvious at the time of the general strike.

* Published in the pamphlet "The Draft Program of the Communist International", by Leon Trotsky. The Militant, New York, 1929.

The entry of the mass movement into the openly revolutionary stage threw back into the camp of the bourgeois reaction even those liberal labor politicians who had become somewhat Left. They betrayed the general strike openly and deliberately and then also undermined and betrayed the miners' strike. The possibility of betrayal is always imbedded in reformism. That does not mean of course that reformism and betrayal are one and the same thing at every moment. Temporary agreements may be made with the reformists, if they take a step forward. But to maintain a bloc with them when they commit treason shortly before the development of a movement, signifies a criminal carelessness towards the traitors and a veiling of betrayal.

The general strike had the task of exerting a united pressure upon the employers and the state with the power of the five million workers, for the question of mining was becoming the most important question of state policy. Thanks to the betrayal of the leadership, the strike was already strangled in the first stage. It was a very strong illusion still to believe after that that an isolated economic struggle of the mine workers alone would achieve that which the general strike did not achieve.

That is precisely where the power of the General Council lay. It aimed with cold calculation at the defeat of the mine workers, in the course of which considerable sections of the workers would be convinced of the "correctness" and the "common sense" of the Judas directions of the General Council.

The retention of the friendship bloc with the General Council, with simultaneous support of the lingering economic strike of the mine workers, against which the General Council came forward, was so to speak calculated to make it possible for the heads of the trade unions to come out of this heaviest test with the lightest possible loss of confidence.

The rôle of the Russian trade unions here, from the revolutionary standpoint, was a very unfavorable and positively pitiful one. Certainly, support of an economic strike, even an isolated one, was absolutely necessary. There can

be no two opinions on that among revolutionists. Yet this support should have borne not only a financial, but also a revolutionary-political character. The All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions should have declared openly to the English mine workers' union and the whole English working class that the mine workers' strike could seriously count upon success only if by its stubbornness, its tenacity and its impetus, it could prepare the way for a *new outbreak of the general strike*. That could have been achieved, however, only by an open and direct struggle against the General Council, that agency of the government and the mining employers. The struggle to convert the economic strike into a political strike signified, therefore, an intense political and organizational war against the General Council. The first step to such a war had to be the break with the Anglo-Russian Committee which had become a reactionary obstacle, a chain on the feet of the working class.

No revolutionist who weighs his words will contend that a victory *would have been guaranteed* along this direction. But a victory was *possible* only on this road. A defeat on such a road, which can lead *later* to victory, would bring home lessons, that is, implant the revolutionary idea in the working class. In the meantime, mere financial support of the lingering and inextricable trade union strike (trade union strike—in its methods: revolutionary-political—in its aim) only meant grist to the mill of the General Council, which could wait calmly until the crumbling of the strike was forced by starvation and it was thereby proved that it "was right". It was of course not easy for the General Council to await this end as an open strike-breaker for several months. Precisely for this very critical period did the General Council need the Anglo-Russian Committee as its political protection from the masses. In this manner the questions of the mortal class combat between English capital and the proletariat, between the General Council and the mine workers, were, so to speak, transformed into questions of a friendly discussion—between the two allies of the bloc, the English General Council and the All-Russian Central Council of Trade Unions, on the subject of which

of the two roads was better: the road of an agreement or the road of an isolated economic struggle. The inevitable outcome of the strike was the agreement, that is, the tragic decision of the friendly "discussion" in favor of the General Council.

The entire policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee, as a result of its false line, was from beginning to end only an aid to the General Council, a support and a strengthening of it. Even the long financial support with which the strike was sustained by the great self-sacrifice of the Russian working class, did not serve the mine workers or the English Communist Party, while the General Council sits in the saddle even more firmly than before the general strike.

These are the results of this unique "strategical manœuver".

The obstinacy with which the retention of the bloc with the General Council was advocated, which was converted to direct servility at the disgraceful Berlin session in April 1927, was also motivated by reference to the "stabilization". During a retardation in the revolutionary development, one is forced to cling to Purcell, you see. This argument, which appeared to be very convincing to a Soviet official perhaps or to a trade unionist of the type of Melnitchansky, in reality constitutes a perfect example of blind empiricism — mixed with scholasticism at that. What sort of significance did the "stabilization" have in its application to English economy and politics, especially in the years 1926-27? Development of the productive forces? Relative satisfaction and pacification of the working masses? Not in the least. The whole so-called stabilization of English capitalism held out only with the aid of the conservative power of the old labor organizations with all their currents and shadings, with the simultaneous weaknesses and irresoluteness of the English Communist Party. On the field of the economic and social relations of England, the revolution has already fully matured. The question now stands purely politically. The cornerposts of the stabilization are formed by the heads of the Labor Party and the trade unions, which, in England, present a united whole,

though with a division of labor. Under such a condition of the working masses, which became obvious through the general strike, the highest rank in the mechanics of the capitalist stabilization is no longer occupied by MacDonald and Thomas, but already by Purcell, Cook and Company. They start things off and Thomas carries them to an end. Without Purcell, Thomas would hang in the air and along with Thomas also Baldwin. It is the false, diplomatic masquerade—"Leftism" of Purcell which sometimes in rotation, sometimes simultaneously, fraternizes with sextons and Bolsheviks, and is always ready not only for retreats but also for betrayal, that forms the main brake on the English revolution. *Stabilization is Purcellism.* From that we see what theoretical absurdity and blind opportunism is the reference to the existence of "stabilization" as an apology for the political bloc with Purcell. Yes, precisely in order to shatter the stabilization, Purcellism had to be destroyed, before all. In such a situation, even a shadow of solidarity with the General Council is the greatest crime and a mark of infamy against the working masses.

Even the most correct strategy cannot, by itself, always lead to victory. The correctness of a strategical idea is judged by whether it observes the real development of class forces and estimates the elements of these forces realistically. The most disgraceful defeat, which has the most grievous consequences for the movement, is the typically Menshevist defeat that is based upon a false estimation of the classes, an underestimation of the revolutionary factors and upon an idealizing of the enemy forces. Of such a type were our defeats in China and in England.

What was expected from the Anglo-Russian Committee for the U.S.S.R.?

In July 1926, Stalin enlightened us at the joint plenum of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission as follows:

"The task of this bloc [the A.-R.C.] consists of 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.”

While he was enlightening us Oppositionists so much that “the defense of the first workers’ republic of the world against intervention must be taken care of”, for we did not know that yet, Stalin added:

“If the reactionary trade unions of England are ready to conclude a bloc with the revolutionary trade unions of our country against the counter-revolutionary imperialists of their own country, why should we not greet such a bloc?”

Were the “reactionary trade unions” capable of conducting a struggle against their imperialists, they would not be reactionary. Stalin lost the distinction between the conceptions *reactionary* and *revolutionary*. He characterizes the English trade unions as reactionary from old memory but in reality entertains miserable illusions with regard to their revolutionism.

After Stalin, the Moscow Committee of the party also declared to the workers of Moscow:

“The Anglo-Russian Committee can and will undoubtedly play an enormous rôle in the struggle against all possible interventions directed against the U.S.S.R. 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.” (*Theses of the Moscow Committee.*)

What did the Opposition reply:

“The more acute the international situation becomes, the more the Anglo-Russian Committee will be transformed into a weapon of English and international imperialism”.

This criticism of the Stalinist hopes in Purcell as the guardian angel of the workers’ state was later characterized by Stalin at the same plenum as a deviation “from Leninism to Trotskyism”.

Voroschilov: “Very true.”

A Voice: “Voroschilov has affixed his seal to it.”

Trotsky: “Fortunately that will all be in the stenogram.”

Yes indeed, all that is included in the stenogram of the July Plenum at which the rude and disloyal opportunists

dared to accuse the Opposition of "defeatism".

This dialogue, which I had to quote here briefly from my earlier article *What Did We Expect and What Did We Get?* is far more useful as a strategical lesson than a whole seminarist chapter on strategy in the draft program. The question: *What did we expect and what did we get?* constitutes the principal strategical criterion in general. It must be applied at the Sixth Congress to all questions that have stood on the order of the day in recent years. It will then be shown conclusively that the strategy of the E.C.C.I., especially since the year 1926, was a strategy of unreal dimensions, false calculations, illusions with regard to the enemy and incitement against especially reliable and persevering co-fighters. In a word, it was the rotten strategy of Right-Centrism.

9. The Manœuverist Character of Revolutionary Strategy

At first sight it is incomprehensible why the "manœuvering ability" and "flexibility" of Bolshevik strategy are passed over in complete silence in the draft. Out of this whole colossal question only one single point is taken, the point on agreements with the colonial bourgeoisie.

In the meantime, the opportunism of the recent period, with its Right deviations becoming ever stronger, has appeared predominantly under the flag of *manœuver* strategy. The refusal to go along with unprincipled, and thereby also harmful combinations, was characterized as lack of "flexibility". Manœuvering ability was declared the basic principle of the majority. Zinoviev already manœuvered in 1925 with Raditch and LaFollette. Stalin and Bucharin thereupon manœuvered with Chiang Kai-Shek, with Purcell and with the kulaks. The apparatus manœuvers constantly with the party and Zinoviev is now manœuvering with the apparatus.

A whole corps of specialists in manœuvers for bureaucratic requirement arose, which consisted predominantly of

people who were never revolutionary fighters, and who now bow all the more ardently before the revolution since it has already conquered power. Borodin manœvered in Canton, Rafes in Peking, D. Petrovsky around the LaManche Channel, Pepper in the United States, and perhaps also in Polynesia, Martinov manœvered from a distance, but for that on every continent. Whole broods of young manœuver academicians have arisen who apply Bolshevik flexibility mainly to the elasticity of their own backs. The task of this school consists in achieving with manœuvers that which can be achieved only through revolutionary class forces. Just as every alchemist of the Middle Ages always hoped, in spite of the failure of the others, to find the recipe for gold, so the present-day manœuver strategists also hope, each in his place, to deceive history. In reality, of course, they are not strategists but only bureaucratic combinationists of every dimension but large ones. Some of them have observed how the Master settled the small questions and imagined that they were now masters of all the secrets of strategy. That is just what the essence of epigonism consists of. Others again took the secret of combinations at second and third hand, and after having been convinced that this does wonders in small matters, they concluded that it is all the better adapted for big matters. However, all attempts to utilize the method of bureaucratic combinations as the "more economic one" as against the revolutionary struggle to decide great questions, had to lead constantly to disgraceful failures. In the meantime, combinationism, armed with the apparatus of the party and the state, broke the neck of the young parties and the young revolutions every time. Chiang Kai-Shek, Wang Chin Wei, Purcell, the kulaks—all these issued forth as victors from the attempts to get the best of them with the aid of "manœuvers".

Naturally, this is not to mean that to manœuver is altogether impermissible, that is, incompatible with a revolutionary strategy of the working class. Only it must be clearly understood that such manœuvering can bear only a subordinated, auxiliary and expedient character in relation

to the principle methods of revolutionary struggle. Once and for all it must be impressed that a manœuver never decides anything in great matters. If combinations often appear to be successful in smaller affairs, this always happens at the expense of great processes. A correct manœuver can only facilitate the decision by giving the possibility of gaining time or of attaining greater results with smaller forces. Difficulties in principle, on the contrary, cannot be overcome with the aid of a manœuver.

The contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is one of principle. That is why the attempt to bridle the Chinese bourgeoisie through organizational and personal manœuvres and to subordinate them to combinatorial plans is no manœuver but a contemptible self-deception of the very greatest dimensions. Classes cannot be deceived. This applies, considered historically, to all the classes and here, in an immediate sense, also to the ruling, possessing class of the exploiter and the educated. The world experience of the latter is so great, the class instinct so refined and the organs of information so multifarious, that an attempt to deceive them by representing oneself as something other than one is in reality, must lead to oneself being caught in the trap instead of the enemy.

The contradiction between the U.S.S.R. and the capitalist world is one of principle. That is why it is impossible to overcome it with the aid of a manœuver. Only with the aid of clear, openly acknowledged concessions to capital, and by utilizing the contradictions between its various parts can the breathing spaces be extended and time gained. But even this only under certain historical premises and by no means forever. It is a great self-deception to believe that the international bourgeoisie can be "neutralized" until the construction of socialism, that is, that the principle contradictions can be overcome with the aid of a manœuver. This self-deception can cost the Soviet republic its existence. Only an international proletarian revolution can liberate us from the principle difficulties. A manœuver can consist either of a concession to the enemy, an arrangement with a temporary and therefore always dubious ally, of an oppor-

tunely calculated retreat in order to keep the enemy from one's throat, or finally, of the raising of partial demands and slogans in such a succession as must bring a split into the camp of the enemy. These are the principal varieties of manœuvres. Still others, more secondary ones, could be instanced. Not every manœuver is by its nature only an episode in relation to the principle strategical line of the struggle. In manœuvering with the Kuo Min Tang and the Anglo-Russian Committee—these must be kept before us constantly as the perfect example of a Menshevik and not a Bolshevik manœuver—the matter was just the reverse. That which should have been only a tactical episode developed there to a strategical line and the real strategic task (the struggle against the bourgeoisie and the reformists) was knocked into a series of incidental and small tactical episodes, which, moreover, had only a decorative effect.

In a manœuver, one must always proceed from the very worst assumptions with regard to one's adversary to whom concessions are made, or with regard to the dubious ally with whom arrangements are concluded, and not from the best. It must be constantly borne in mind that the ally can perhaps become an enemy by tomorrow. This applies also to such allies as the peasantry:

“We must be distrustful towards the peasantry, always organize ourselves separately from it and be ready for a struggle against it, in so far as the peasantry shows itself as reactionary or anti-proletarian.” (Lenin, Volume 6, page 130.)

This by no means contradicts that great strategical task of the proletariat which Lenin worked out for the first time theoretically as well as practically with such gifted profundity, the task of tearing the exploited lower sections of the peasants away from the influence of the bourgeoisie and leading them behind us. Only, the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry has by no means been presented by history as a finished creation, and can also just as little be created through nauseous manœuvres, contemptible attempts at wheedling and pathetic declamations. The alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry is a

question of political relations of forces and consequently also — the complete independence of the proletariat in relation to *all* other classes. The ally must first be attracted. This can be achieved, on the one hand, by acceding with great attention to all its progressive and historically conditioned requirements, on the other hand, by conducting oneself with organized distrust towards the ally and fighting tirelessly and relentlessly against its every anti-proletarian tendency and custom.

The import and the limits of a manœuvre must always be clearly considered and outlined. A concession must be called a concession, and a retreat a retreat. It is not so dangerous to exaggerate the significance of one's own concessions as to underestimate them. The vigilance of the class must be supported and the distrust of one's own party organized, and not lulled.

The principal weapon in a manœuvre, as in every historical action of the working class in general, is the party. But the party is not simply a tractable weapon in the hand of the "master" of the manœuvre, but a conscious and spontaneous weapon, the highest expression of proletarian spontaneity as a whole. Because of that, every manœuvre throughout its course must be grasped by the party itself. It is not of course a matter here of diplomatic, military or conspirative secrets, that is, not of the *technique* of the struggle of the proletarian state or the proletarian party under capitalist conditions. It is a matter here of the *political content* of the manœuvre. That is why the whispered explanations, according to which the course of 1924 to 1928 towards the kulaks was a great manœuvre, are absurd and criminal. The kulak cannot be deceived. He does not judge by words, but by deeds, by taxes, prices and net profit. However, one's own party, the working class and the village poor can be very well deceived. Nothing is so calculated to disintegrate the revolutionary spirit of the party as unprincipled manœuvring and manœuvring behind its back.

The most important, best established and most unalterable rule of every manœuvre says: One's own party

organization should never be diluted, united or combined with another, no matter how "friendly" the latter may still be today. Such a step should never be undertaken which leads, directly or indirectly, openly or maskedly, to the subordination of the party to other parties, or to organizations of other classes and therewith limits the freedom of one's own agitation, or a step through which one is made responsible, even if only in part, for the political line of other parties. You shall not mix up the banners, not to speak of kneeling before another banner.

It is the worst and most dangerous thing if a manœuver arises out of the impatient opportunistic endeavor to outstrip the development of one's own party and to jump over the necessary stages of its maturity. It is right here that no stages must be jumped over. To jump over necessary stages with the aid of a purely superficial, false, diplomatic, combinatorial and deceitful gathering together and union of contentious organizations and elements—such experiments are always dangerous. But for young and weak parties they are positively fatal.

In a manœuver, just as in a battle, it is not strategical wisdom alone that decides (still less the combinatorial cunning), but the entire relations of forces. Even a correctly contrived manœuver is in general all the more dangerous for a revolutionary party the younger and weaker it is in relation to its enemies, allies and semi-confederates. That is why we arrive here at an essential point for the Comintern. The Bolshevik party by no means began with manœuvering as a universal method, but it came to it, it grew into it in the measure that it established roots within the working class, became strong politically and matured ideologically.

That is just where the misfortune lies, that the epigones of Bolshevik strategy extol manœuvering ability and flexibility to the young Communist parties as the quintessence of this strategy, thereby tearing them down from the historical foundation and training them to unprincipled combinations which, unfortunately, only too often correspond to marking time. Flexibility was not nor should it be today

the main quality of Bolshevism, but rather *granite hardness*. It was precisely of this quality, for which its enemies and opponents reproached it, that Bolshevism was always justly proud. Not a soulful "optimism", but intolerance, vigilance, revolutionary distrust, and the struggle for every hand's breadth of independence — these are the basic qualities of Bolshevism. The Communist parties of the West and the East must also begin with their cultivation. The right to carry through great manœuvres must first be gained in battle by preparing the political and material possibility to carry them through, that is, the strength, firmness and perseverance of one's own organization.

The Menshevik manœuvres with the Kuo Min Tang and the General Council are therefore tenfold criminal because they weighed down upon the frail shoulders of the Communist Parties of China and England. These manœuvres not only inflicted a defeat upon the revolution and the working class, but also crushed, weakened and undermined this weapon for the young Communist parties in the future struggle for a long time. At the same time they also introduced elements of political demoralization into the ranks of the oldest party of the Comintern, the C.P.S.U.

The strategical chapter of the draft remains as obstinately silent about manœuvering, that hobby-horse of late years, as if its mouth were filled with water. Goodhearted critics would say: Even that is good. Only, that would be a great mistake. The misfortune lies in the fact that the draft program itself, as we have already shown in a series of examples and will still show, also bears the character of a manœuver and that in the bad, that is, combinatory sense. The draft makes manœuvres with its own party. A portion of its weak spots it masks with the formula "according to Lenin," others it evades by silence. That is how matters also stand with the question of manœuvering strategy. It is impossible to speak on these questions without adducing the fresh experiences in China and England. The very mention of manœuvres would have to conjure up the figures of Chiang Kai-Shek and Purcell. But the authors do not want that. They prefer to be

silent on the favorite theme and to leave the leadership of the Comintern a free hand. And that is precisely what must not be permitted. The combinationists and their candidates must have their hands bound. That is just the purpose the program should serve. Otherwise it would be superfluous.

A place must absolutely be found in the strategical chapter for the principled rules which determine and limit manœuvering as an auxiliary method of the revolutionary struggle against the class enemy which can only be a life and death struggle. The rules noted above, which Marx and Lenin taught, can undoubtedly be presented even more briefly and precisely. But they must by all means be brought into the program of the Comintern.

10. The Strategy of Civil War

In connection with the question of the armed uprising, the draft program says quite casually:

“This struggle is subject to the rules of the art of war. It presupposes a plan of war, an offensive character of the fighting actions and unlimited sacrifice and heroism on the part of the proletariat.”

Here the draft does not go beyond a terse repetition of the casual remarks once made by Marx. In the meanwhile we have had, on the one hand, the experiences of the October revolution, and on the other, those of the Hungarian and Bavarian revolutions, of the struggle in Italy in 1920, the uprising in Bulgaria in September 1923, the German movement of 1923, Esthonia in 1924, the English general strike of 1926, the uprising of the Viennese proletariat in 1923 and the second Chinese revolution of 1925-27. A program of the Comintern would have to contain a far more lucid and concrete characterization of the social and political prerequisites of the armed uprising as well as of the military and strategical preliminary conditions and methods that can guarantee the victory. And nothing exposes the superficial and literary character of this document so much as the fact that the chapter devoted to revolutionary strategy occupies itself with Corneliesen and the

Guild Socialists (Jean Grave, Hobson and Cole, even by name), but gives neither a general characterization of the strategy of the proletariat in the imperialist epoch nor an exposition of the methods of the struggle for power on the basis of living historical material.

In 1924, after the tragic experiences in Germany, we raised that question anew, namely, that the Comintern must place on the order of the day and work out the strategy and tactics of armed uprising, of civil war and of war in general.

"It must be admitted bluntly that the question of the period of the armed uprising frequently has the character of litmus paper, with regard to the revolutionary consciousness of many European Communists who have not liberated themselves to this day from their temporizing, fatalistic attitude towards the fundamental tasks of the revolution. This attitude found expression most deeply and most talentedly in Rosa Luxemburg. Psychologically this is perfectly comprehensible. She grew up mainly in struggle against the bureaucratic apparatus of the social democracy and the trade unions. She demonstrated tirelessly that this apparatus displaces the initiative of the masses and she saw the only way out and salvation in a spontaneous movement that was to overthrow all social democratic obstructions and barriers. A revolutionary general strike that inundates all the banks of bourgeois society became for Luxemburg a synonym for the proletarian revolution. Only, a general strike, be it ever so distinguished by mass strength, does not yet decide the question of power, but only raises it. For the seizure of power it is necessary to organize the armed uprising on the basis of the general strike. To be sure, the whole development of Rosa Luxemburg proceeded in this direction and she went off the stage without having said her last word, yes, not even the last but one. However, up to the very latest period, very strong tendencies towards revolutionary fatalism have prevailed within the Communist party: The revolution is coming, the revolution approaches, the revolution will bring with it the armed uprising and power, and the party—will carry on

revolutionary propaganda in this period and wait for the results. To put the question of the date quite crassly under such conditions would mean to be startled out of fatalistic passivity and to turn towards the basic revolutionary task, that is, to the conscious organization of an armed uprising in order to tear the power out of the hands of the enemy." (From the speech of Trotsky at the session of the Board of the Military Science Society on July 29, 1924, PRAVDA, September 6, 1924.)

"We devote sufficient time and theoretical labor to the Paris Commune of 1871, but completely neglect the struggle of the German proletariat which already has rich experiences in civil war. Further, we hardly occupy ourselves at all with the Bulgarian uprising of last September and finally, what is most striking, we have completely deposited the experiences of the October in the archives . . . The experiences of the October, the only victorious proletarian revolution up to now, must be studied in detail. A strategical and tactical calendar of the October must be compiled. It must be shown, wave by wave, how events developed and how they affected the party, the Soviets, the Central Committee and the military organizations. What did the vacillations inside the party mean? What specific weight did they have in the general swing of events? What was the rôle of the military organizations? That would be a work of inestimable importance. To defer it still further would be a positive crime." (*Ebenda.*)

"So what does the essential task consist of? The task consists of creating a universal reference work or an introduction, a textbook, 'regulations' on the question of the civil war, and therefore above all things of the armed uprising as the high point of the revolution. A balance must be drawn from the experiences, the preliminary conditions thoroughly analyzed, the mistakes examined, the most correct operations picked out and the necessary conclusions drawn. Will we thereby enrich science, that is, the knowledge of the laws of historical development, or art as the totality of experience, precept and action? The one as well as the other, I believe. For our aim is a strictly posi-

tive one: the enrichment of the revolutionary art of war.

“Such ‘regulations’ must necessarily have a very complicated superstructure. Above all, a characterization of the principled assumptions for the seizure of power by the proletariat must be presented. Here we still remain on the field of revolutionary politics. For the uprising is also politics—only by special means. The analysis of the premises for the armed uprising must be adapted to the varying types of countries. There are countries with a proletarian majority of the population and also countries with an insignificant minority of the proletariat and with an absolute predominance of the peasantry. Between these two extreme poles lie the countries of the transitional type. As a basis for the examination, therefore, at least three types of countries must be taken: the industrial country, the agrarian country and the intermediate stages. The introduction [on the premises and the conditions for the revolution] must contain the characterization of every single one of these types of countries from the point of view of the civil war. We consider the uprising from two sides. On the one, as a determined rupture of the objective laws of the class struggle and on the other, from the subjective or active standpoint: how should the uprising be prepared and carried through in order best to guarantee its victory.” (*Ebenda.*)

In 1924, a collective work on the elaboration of regulations of civil war, that is, a Marxist introduction to the questions of the open conflict of the classes and the armed struggle for the dictatorship, was begun by the large circle of persons grouped around the Military Science Society. But this work encountered the resistance of the Comintern—this resistance has been inserted into the general system of the struggle against so-called Trotskyism—and was later liquidated altogether. A more light-minded and criminal step can hardly be imagined. In an epoch of abrupt changes, regulations of the civil war in the sense presented above would have to be part of the iron stability of every one in the revolutionary cadres, not to speak of the leaders of the party. These “regulations” would have to be studied

constantly and supplemented by the fresh experiences of one's own country. Only such a study can present a certain guarantee against panicky steps of capitulation just at the moment when boldness and firm determination are required, as well as against adventurist leaps in a period which requires caution and patience.

Had such regulations been made part of those books, the serious study of which would be as much the duty of every Communist as acquaintance with basic ideas of Marx and Lenin, we might probably have avoided the defeats of recent years, which were easy to avoid, especially the uprising in Canton contrived with such childish light-mindedness. On this question the draft program speaks almost as charily as it does of Gandhism in India. Of course a program cannot become engrossed in details. But it must present a problem in all its magnitude, and bring forth its main formulæ with a reference to its most important achievements and its most important mistakes.

Quite independently of this, the Sixth Congress, in our opinion, must obligate the E.C.C.I. in a special decision to elaborate "regulations" of the civil war as a guide proceeding from the balance of the past experiences of victory and defeat.

11. The Question of the Party Régime

The organization questions of Bolshevism are inseparably bound up with questions of program and tactics. On this theme, the draft program mentions quite incidentally the necessity of "the strictest revolutionary organization" of democratic centralism. That is the only, and at that, quite new formula that is to characterize the party régime. We have known quite well that the party régime must rest upon the foundation of democratic centralism. Therewith it was assumed in theory and also carried out in practice that democratic centralism included a full possibility of discussion, the right of criticism and the expression of disagreement, the right of election and removal just as it

involved at the same time an iron discipline during actions under the leadership of the elective and removable directing organs. If, by *democracy*, was understood the subordination of the individual party organs to the party, then *centralism* meant a correctly erected, conscious discipline that guaranteed the fighting ability of the party. Now, however, to this formula, which has stood the test in the whole past, an entirely new criterion has been added, that of "*the strictest revolutionary organization*". It therefore appears that simple democratic centralism no longer suffices for the party and that it now requires a *revolutionary organization* of democratic centralism. This formula quite simply puts the new autocratic idea of "revolutionary organization" above democratic centralism and thereby also above the party.

What is the main feature of the idea of revolutionary organization, and a "very strict" one at that, which even stands *above* the idea of democratic centralism? Its main feature is a party apparatus which, completely independent of the party or aspiring to such an independence, is supposed to preserve "order" through its autocratic bureaucracy without the party masses, and when "order" requires it, to be able to suspend or break through the will of the party, by violating statutes, postponing party conventions or making the latter a mere fiction.

The apparatus has hankered for a long time for such a formula as "revolutionary organization" that was to set it above democracy and centralism. In the last two years we have already heard a whole series of explanations of party democracy by the responsible representatives of the party leadership the sense of which amounted to the fact that democracy and centralism only mean subordination to higher organs. Of course, such an "organization" must outwardly be enveloped with formulæ and disguises of democracy, while the latter is driven out by circulars from above, and self-criticism is regulated under the threat of Article 58.* The attempt is made to show that the viola-

*The article in the Soviet Penal Code dealing with measures to be taken against counter-revolutionists. It was disloy-

tion of democracy does not proceed from the leading center but from the so-called "executive organs", against which, however, one cannot proceed in any manner since every "executive" proves to be at the same time also a "leader" of all those who stand under him.

Thus the new formula is theoretically completely absurd. It demonstrates by its newness and absurdity that it arose only for the satisfaction of certain matured requirements. It is a faithful copy of the bureaucratic apparatus that created it.

The question is furthermore indissolubly bound up with the question of factions and groupings. In every disputed question and every difference of opinion, the leadership and official press not only of the C.P.S.U. but also of the Comintern and all its sections has always shifted this question to the field of factions and groupings. *Without temporary ideological groupings, the ideological life of the party is unthinkable.* Nobody has yet discovered any other means for that. The attempts made up to now to find another means all amounted to the same recipe of strangling all ideological life in the party.

Naturally, groupings as well as differences of opinion are an "evil". Only, this evil is just as much a necessary ingredient of the dialectic of party development as poison is in the life of the human organism.

A still greater evil is signalized by the transformation of groupings into organized, and still more, into closed factions. The art of party leadership lies precisely in never letting things go so far. Through a mere prohibition, of course, this cannot be achieved. The experiences of the C.P.S.U. demonstrate that best of all.

At the Tenth Party Congress, Lenin, under the cannon roar of the Kronstadt uprising and the kulak uprisings, put through a decision that prohibited factions and groupings. By groupings were not understood temporary currents

ally employed by the ruling group in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to persecute the supporters of the Bolshevik-Leninist Opposition, to imprison, exile and banish them.

that inevitably arise in the process of party life, but factions that appear as groupings. The party masses understood well the deadly danger of the moment and supported their leaders in it by adopting the harsh and the, literally, inflexible resolutions on the prohibition of factions and factionalists. Still the party knew very well then that this formula was construed by the Central Committee under the leadership of Lenin in such a way that it would be neither rude nor disloyal and still less lead to the abuse of power (see the "Testament" of Lenin). The party knew that, exactly a year later, or if a third of the party would request it, even a month later, it could examine the experiences at a new party congress, and add the necessary qualifications. The decision of the Tenth Party Congress was a very sharp measure, evoked by the critical position of the ruling party at its most dangerous turn from War Communism to the N.E.P. This sharp measure proved to be fully justified, for it only supplemented a correct and far-sighted policy and cut the ground from under the groupings that had arisen in the transition to the New Economic Policy.

However, the decision of the Tenth Party Congress on factions and groupings, which even then required an appropriate interpretation and application, is by no means an absolute principle that stands above all other requirements of the party, independent of the country, the situation and the time. In so far as the party leadership after the departure of Lenin—in order to protect itself from all criticism—supported itself formally upon the decisions of the Tenth Party Congress on factions and groupings, it stifled party democracy ever more, and at the same time accomplished less and less its real purpose, the elimination of the factionalists. For the task does not consist of prohibiting factions, but of not permitting any factions to arise. Meanwhile, never have factions so devastated the party, by disintegrating its unity, as since the departure of Lenin from the leadership. At the same time, however, there has never prevailed in the party such a hundred

percent, but formal, unanimity as at present, which is rotten through and through and only serves to cover up the worsened methods of party life.

A secret party faction arose in the C.P.S.U. even before the Twelfth Party Congress. Later it even assumed the character of a conspirative organization, with its own illegal Central Committee ("the collegium of seven"), with its own circulars, agents, codes, and so forth. Since then, the party apparatus has been constructed out of members of an uncontrollable order, which disposes of the extraordinary resources not only of the party but also of the state apparatus and reduces the party masses to a mere cover and an auxiliary instrument for its combinatory manœuvres.

Yet, the more boldly this closed apparatus faction detaches itself from the control of the party masses, who become ever more diluted by all possible sorts of "drives", the deeper and more sharply does the process of faction division proceed, not only below but also within the apparatus itself. Under the complete and unlimited domination of the apparatus over the party, already accomplished at the time of the Thirteenth Party Congress, the differences of opinion within the apparatus itself find no way out, for, to appeal to the party for a real decision would mean to subject the apparatus to it again. Only that apparatus grouping which is convinced in advance that it has the majority is ready to decide the disputed questions by the methods of *apparatus democracy*, that is, by questioning the members of the secret faction. The result is that inside the ruling apparatus faction, its own antagonistic factions arise that do not strive so much to capture the majority within the whole faction as they do to get the support of the institutions of the state apparatus. So that as far as the majority at the party Congress is concerned, it is already quite automatically assured, for the Congress can be convoked whenever it is most convenient and be prepared to one's own taste. That is how the usurpation of the apparatus develops and thereby presents a threatening

danger not only to the party but also to the dictatorship of the proletariat.

After the first "anti-Trotskyist" campaign in 1923-24 was carried through with the aid of this apparatus faction, a deep scission took place within the illegal faction directed by the collegium of seven. The reason for this was the class dissatisfaction of the Leningrad proletarian vanguard with the incipient down-sliding in questions of internal as well as foreign policy. The advanced Leningrad workers continued in 1925 the work begun by the advanced workers of Moscow in 1923. Only, these deep class tendencies found no open outlet in the party. They found expression in the hollow struggle within the apparatus faction.

In April 1925, the Central Committee sent out a circular to the whole party which was supposed to deny the rumors allegedly spread by the "Trotskyists" (!) that a difference of opinion on the peasantry prevailed within the kernel of the "Leninists", that is, within the factional collegium of seven. It was only from this circular that broad party cadres learned that such differences of opinion existed at all, which did not, however, prevent this high eminence from deceiving the party membership with the assertion that it is the "Opposition" which is disrupting the "unity" of the "Leninist Guard". This propaganda reached its fullest bloom when the Fourteenth Party Congress took the party masses by surprise by these amorphous and complicated, but according to their *class origin*, nevertheless profound differences of opinion between the two sections of the ruling faction. At the very last moment before the party Congress, however, the Moscow and the Leningrad organizations, that is, the two foundations of the party, adopted resolutions at their district conferences of a *directly opposite character*. It is self-understood that both were adopted unanimously. This miracle of "revolutionary organization" was declared by Moscow to be a violation of the Leningrad apparatus and Leningrad raised the same accusation against Moscow. As though there had ever existed a sort of an impenetrable wall between the

Moscow and Leningrad organizations. Here as well as there the party apparatus always decided, by showing with its hundred percent unanimity that in all the principle questions of party life there is no party.

The Fourteenth Party Congress was now compelled to settle new differences of opinion on various basic questions and to determine a new composition of the leadership *behind the back of the unconsulted party*. The Congress immediately left this decision to a most scrupulously sifted hierarchy of party secretaries. The Fourteenth Party Congress was a further milestone on the road to the liquidation of party democracy by the methods of "order", that is, the arbitrary power of the masked apparatus faction. The next stage of the struggle took place only a little while ago. The trick of the ruling faction consisted of always confronting the party with an already adopted decision, with accomplished facts that could not be made good again.

This new, higher state of "revolutionary organization", however, did not by any means signify the liquidation of factions and groups. On the contrary, their development became still stronger and sharper, within the party masses as well as within the party apparatus. So far as the party was concerned, the bureaucratic liquidation of the "groupings" became ever sharper here, and by venturing as far as the infamy of a Wrangel officer and Article 58, only demonstrated its impotence. At the same time, a process of a *new split* within the ruling faction itself took place, which is even now developing further. Certainly, even now there is no lack of mendacious demonstrations of unanimity and of circulars that are supposed to prove the complete unanimity of the leaders. Nevertheless, all indications are that the clandestine struggle within the closed apparatus faction, because of its impassability, is assuming an ever sharper character and is driving the party to some new explosion.

This then, is the theory and the practice of "revolutionary organization", which must surely be converted into the theory and the practice of usurpation.

This matter, however, is far from being limited any longer to the Soviet Union. In 1923, the campaign against the formation of factions proceeded mainly from the motivation that factions can form the kernel of new parties and the dictatorship of the proletariat in a country with a predominantly peasant population can permit no freedom of parties.

In itself, this statement is absolutely correct. Only it requires a correct policy and a correct régime. But it is clear that this statement should at the same time have signified the abandonment of the extension of the Tenth Party Congress resolution of the ruling C.P.S.U. to the Communist parties in the bourgeois states. But the bureaucratic régime has its own tortuous logic. If it tolerates no democratic control within the Soviet party, then it tolerates it all the less within the Comintern, which still stands formally above the C.P.S.U. That is why the seven made a universal recipe out of the rude and disloyal interpretation of the resolution of the Tenth Party Congress and extended it over all the Communist organizations on the globe.

Bolshevism always distinguished itself by a historical concretization in elaborating organization forms, but not by naked schemas. The Bolsheviks changed their organizational structure radically at every transition from one stage to another. Now, on the contrary, one and the same principle of "revolutionary organization" is applied to the powerful party of the proletarian dictatorship as well as to the German Communist Party, which presents a serious political factor, to the young Chinese party, which was immediately drawn into the vortex of revolutionary struggles, as well as, finally, to the party of the U.S.A., which really constitutes but a small propaganda circle. It is enough for any kind of doubt to be expressed in the latter about the methods thrust upon it by Pepper who is right in command, and there descends upon the "doubters" all possible measures of reprisal for the formation of factions. And the young party, which is still in the completely

embryonic condition of a political organism, without any real connection with the masses, without the experiences of a revolutionary leadership and without theoretical schooling, has already been armed from head to foot with all the attributes of "revolutionary organization", so that it looks like a six-year-old boy wearing his father's equipment.

The C.P.S.U. possesses a very rich ideological revolutionary experience. Yet, as the last five years showed, even it has not been able to live unpunished for a single day on the interest of its capital alone, but is obliged to renew and enlarge it constantly, which is possible only through a collective working of the party mind. Now what should be said of the foreign C.P.s which were formed a few years ago and are just passing through the initial stage of accumulating theoretical knowledge and practical ability. Without a real freedom of party life, freedom of discussion and freedom of collective, and under that also of group elaboration of their paths, these parties will never become a revolutionary power.

Up until the Tenth Party Congress, which prohibited the formation of factions, the C.P.S.U. had already existed two decades without such a prohibition. And precisely these two decades trained and prepared it so that it was able to adopt and endure the strict decision of the Tenth Party Congress at the most difficult juncture. The Communist parties of the West, however, commence with it right at the beginning.

Lenin—and I along with him—feared most of all that the C.P.S.U., armed with the powerful resources of the state, would have a stifling and excessive influence upon the young parties of the West that were just being organized. Lenin warned tirelessly against excesses regarding centralism and always contended against the all too strong disposition towards it on the part of the E.C.C.I. and the Præsidium, and especially against the forms and methods of support which became direct commands from which there was no appeal. The change began in 1924 under the slogan of "Bolshevization". If under Bolshevization is understood

the cleansing of the party from heterogeneous elements and pursuits, from social democratic officials who cling to their posts, from freemasons, from democratic pacifists, from idealistic muddle-heads, etc., then this work was already being carried through since the first day of the Comintern's existence. At the Fourth Congress this work, with regard to the French party, even assumed extremely sharp forms of struggle. Still this real Bolshevization was inseparably connected with the individual experiences of the national sections of the Comintern and grew out of these experiences. Their touchstones were the questions of national policy which became international questions. The Bolshevization of 1924 completely assumed the character of a caricature. The revolver was held at the temples of the leading organs of the Communist parties and they were required to adopt immediately a final position on the internal differences of opinion in the C.P.S.U., it depending in advance upon this position whether they could remain further in the Comintern. The European Communist parties, however, were by no means equipped in 1924 for a sudden decision of the Russian discussion questions, in which just at that time two principled tendencies were coming forward, growing out of the new stage of the proletarian dictatorship. Of course the cleansing work was also necessary after 1924. Alien elements were also quite correctly removed from many sections. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the "Bolshevization" consisted of this: with the wedge of the Russian differences of opinion, driven from above with the hammer of the state apparatus, the leaderships being formed at the moment in the Communist parties of the West were smashed over and over again. All this sailed under the flag of the struggle against the formation of factions.

If a faction crystallizes inside the party of the proletarian vanguard which threatens to paralyze its fighting ability for a long time, the party then is naturally confronted with the decision whether it should still allow time for a supplementary re-examination or it considers an immediate split as unavoidable. A fighting party can

never be the sum of factions that pull in opposite directions. Still, to employ the split as a preventive measure against differences of opinion and to repulse every group and grouping that raises a voice of criticism, would mean to transform the internal life of the party into a chain of organizational abortions. Such methods do not promote the continuation and the development of a birth, but only exhaust the maternal organism, that is, the organism of the party. The struggle against the formation of factions in this way becomes much more dangerous than the formation of factions itself.

At the present time we have a situation in which the actual initiators and founders of almost all the Communist parties of the world have been put outside of the International, including its former chairman. The leading groups of the two successive stages in party development are either expelled or removed from leadership in almost all the parties. In Germany, the Brandler group today still finds itself in the position of semi-party membership*. The Maslow group has been put outside the party. In France, the old groups of Rosmer, Monatte and Loriot are expelled. Souvarine as well as the leading group of the next period, Treint and Girault, are likewise expelled. In Belgium, the kernel group of van Overstraeten has been expelled. If the Bordiga group, the founder of the Communist Party of Italy, is only half expelled, that is to be accounted for by the conditions of the Fascist régime. In Czecho-Slovakia, in Switzerland, in Norway, in the United States, in a word, in almost all the parties of the world we perceive more or

* Since this was written, the Brandler group has been expelled from the German Communist Party as leaders of the Right wing, while Amadeo Bordiga, one of the founders of the Communist Party of Italy, has also been expelled upon his release from a Fascist island prison, for his support to the Left Opposition. Shortly after his expulsion, a new group of leaders and militants in the Italian Party (Santini, Feroce, Blassco and others) were likewise expelled for supporting the standpoint of the Left wing.

less similar phenomena which arose in the period after Lenin. That many of the expelled made grievous mistakes is incontestable and we pointed that out no later than others. That many of the expelled, after their expulsion from the Comintern, have turned back to a great extent, in their points of departure, to the Left social democracy or to syndicalism, is equally true. Only, the task of leadership by no means consists of driving the young leaderships of the national parties into a blind alley every time, and thereby condemning their individual representatives to ideological degeneration. The "revolutionary organization" of the bureaucratic leadership therefore stands as a menacing obstacle in the path of the development of all the parties of the Communist International.



Organizational questions are inseparable from questions of program and tactics. A clear account must be rendered on the fact that the most important source of opportunism in the Comintern is constituted by the bureaucratic apparatus régime in the Comintern itself as well as in its leading party. That bureaucratism in the Soviet Union is at the same time also the expression and the means of pressure of the non-proletarian classes upon the proletariat, of that there cannot, after the experiences of the years 1923-28, be any doubt. The draft of the program of the Comintern gives a quite correct formulation in this case when it says that bureaucratic degeneration "arises inevitably on the basis of an insufficiently cultured mass and class influences alien to the proletariat". Here we have the key to the understanding not only of bureaucratism in general, but also of its extraordinary growth in the last five years. If the insufficient cultural level of the masses rose constantly in this period, which is not to be doubted, then the basis for the *growth* of bureaucratism can be sought only in the *growth* of class influences alien to the proletariat. To the degree in which the European Communist parties, above all, their directing bodies, adapted

themselves organizationally to the transpositions and regroupings in the apparatus of the C.P.S.U., the bureaucratism of the foreign Communist parties was for the most part only a copy and a supplement of the bureaucratism within the C.P.S.U.

The selection of the leading elements in the Communist parties has proceeded and still proceeds mainly from the assumption of their readiness to agree with the very latest apparatus grouping of the C.P.S.U. The more independent and responsible elements in the leadership of the foreign parties, who were not in agreement with the constant changes, were either removed altogether from the party in a purely administrative manner, or they were driven into the Right (often only *seemingly* Right) wing, or they came to the Left Opposition. In this manner, the organic process of the selection and welding together of the leading revolutionary elements, on the basis of the proletarian struggle under the leadership of the Comintern, was all at once interrupted, altered, distorted, and in part even directly falsified through the administrative and bureaucratic sifting out from above. It is natural that those of the leading Communists who always adopted the finished decisions with great readiness and signed any resolution at all, often obtained predominance over those party elements who were still imbued with the feeling of revolutionary responsibility. Instead of a selection of tested and steadfast revolutionists, there now took place ever more a selection of the bureaucratically best adapted.

All questions of internal and foreign policy always lead us back irresistibly to the question of the party régime. The abandonment of the class line in the questions of the Chinese revolution, of the English labor movement, of the economy of the U.S.S.R., of wages, of taxes, etc., already constitutes, of course, a serious danger in itself. Yet this danger is increased tenfold because the bureaucratic régime binds the party hand and foot and gives it no possibility of correcting the line of the leading party heads in a normal manner. The same applies to the Comintern, too. The

resolution of the Fourteenth Party Congress of the C.P.S.U. on the necessity of a more democratic and more collective leadership in the Comintern has been transformed in practice into its opposite. The changing of the régime in the Comintern is becoming a life question for the international revolutionary movement. This change can be achieved in two ways: either hand in hand with the change of the régime in the C.P.S.U. or in the struggle against the leading rôle of the C.P.S.U. in the Comintern. Every effort must be made to assure the first way. The struggle for the change of régime in the C.P.S.U. is at the same time a struggle for regenerating the régime in the Comintern and for the retention of the leading ideological rôle of our party.

That is why the very thought must be relentlessly removed from the program that living, active parties be put under the control of the "revolutionary organization" of an irremovable governmental party bureaucracy. The party itself must be given back its rights. It is necessary for the party to become a party again. That must also be said in the program in such words that no possibility of existence is left to bureaucratism and usurpatory tendencies by tricks of interpretation and theoretical subterfuge.

12. The Reasons for the Defeat of the Opposition and Its Perspective

The Left, proletarian wing of the party, which set down its views in a series of documents, the principal of which is the *Platform of the Bolshevik-Leninists (Opposition)*, has been subjected, beginning with the fall of 1923, to a systematic, organizational campaign of extermination. The methods of this liquidation were determined by the character of the party régime, which became more bureaucratic to the degree that the pressure of the non-proletarian classes upon the proletariat was stronger. The

possibilities for success of such methods were conditioned by the general political character of the period in which the proletariat had to suffer the greatest defeats, the social democracy came to life again, and in the Communist parties, the Centrist-opportunist tendencies could become stronger. The first demolition of the Opposition followed immediately after the defeat of the German revolution, as a sort of supplement to it, so to speak. This demolition would have been completely unthinkable with a victory of the German proletariat, which would have raised extraordinarily the class consciousness of the proletariat of the U.S.S.R., and therefore, also, its power of resistance against the pressure of the bourgeois classes, internally as well as externally, and against the intermediary of this pressure—party bureaucratism.

To classify the general spirit of the regroupings that took place in the Comintern towards the end of 1923 it would be highly important to follow step by step how the leading group gained its "victories" over the Opposition at the various stages of its down-sliding. I am not in a position to carry through this work within the limits of a criticism of the draft program. Nevertheless, it is sufficient for our purposes to consider how the first "victory" over the Opposition in September 1924 was understood and explained. In his debut article on the question of international policy, Stalin said the following:

"The decisive victory of the revolutionary wing in the Communist parties is the surest indication of *the revolutionary processes that are now taking place within the working class.*"

And in another place in the same article he says:

"If we still add to this the fact of the complete isolation of the opportunist currents in the R.C.P., the picture is complete. The Fifth Congress only consolidated the victory of the revolutionary wing in the principal sections of the Comintern." (PRAVDA, September 20, 1924. My emphasis. L.T.)

The defeat of the Opposition, therefore, is explained

here as the result of the fact that the proletariat is going to the *Left*, is immediately approaching the revolution and has already given the revolutionary wing the ascendancy over the opportunist in all the sections of the Comintern. Now, after almost five years have passed since the greatest defeat of the international proletariat in the fall of 1923, PRAVDA finds itself compelled to admit that "the wave of a certain apathy and dejection that set in after the defeat of the German proletariat and permitted German capital to consolidate its position" (PRAVDA, January 28, 1928.) is only now beginning to disappear.

But then there arises a question which is new for the present leadership of the Comintern, it is true, but not for us: Should not therefore the defeat of the Opposition in 1923 and the years that followed be explained not by a *Leftward swing*, but by a *Rightward swing* of the working class? The answer to this question decides everything.

At the Fifth Congress in 1924 and later on in various articles and speeches, the clear and categorical answer to that was given: The strengthening of the revolutionary elements within the labor movement of Europe, the new rising wave, the approaching proletarian revolution—that is what brought about the collapse of the Opposition.

Now, however, the turn of the political conjuncture after 1923 towards the Right and not towards the Left has become a well established, already generally recognized, incontestable fact. That is why the other fact, too, is not to be disputed that the evolution of the struggle against the Opposition and the accentuation of this struggle up to expulsion and exile is most closely connected with the political process of bourgeois stabilization in Europe. To be sure, this process was frequently interrupted in the last four years by important revolutionary events. Only, new mistakes of the leadership, more grievous than those of 1923 in Germany, gave the victory into the hands of the enemy every time and thereby created new sources of sustenance for bourgeois stabilization. *The international revolutionary movement has suffered defeats and together with it also*

the Left, proletarian, Leninist wing of the C.P.S.U. and the Comintern.

This exposition would not be complete were we to overlook the internal processes in the economy and politics of the U.S.S.R. arising out of this world situation. While the contradictions on the basis of the N.E.P. were growing, the leadership did not understand the problem of the economic bond between city and country, underestimated the disproportion and the significance of industrialization, did not comprehend the significance of a *planned* economy, and many other things.

The growth of the economic and political pressure of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois sections within the country on the basis of defeats of the proletarian revolution in Europe and Asia—that was the historical chain which tightened around the neck of the Opposition for four years long. Whoever has not understood this has not understood anything at all.

With such a presentation, I was forced at almost every single stage to oppose to the line that was actually carried through, one which was rejected as a Trotskyist line. The general sense of this struggle is becoming distinctly clear to every Marxist.

Even if the purely episodic accusations of “Trotskyism”, corroborated by adducing a mass of elegant and precious quotations of the last twenty-five years, could temporarily confuse, yet everyone could ascertain, by a generally cohesive evaluation of the ideological struggle of the last five years, that two lines were at hand here. The one a self-conscious and consistent line which presented a continuation and development of the theoretical and strategical principles of Lenin in their application to the internal questions of the U.S.S.R. as well as the questions of the world revolution—that was the line of the Opposition. The other, however, an unconscious, contradictory and vacillating line, which slid down in a zig-zag from the path of Leninism under the pressure of hostile class forces at the time of the international political ebb—that was the line

of the official leadership. At great turning points people sooner change their conceptions than their customary words. That is a general law of the ideological change of colors. While the leadership was revising Lenin in almost all essential points, it passed it off as a development of Leninism and at the same time characterized the real international revolutionary content of Leninism as "Trotskyism". It did this not only in order to mask itself both outwardly and inwardly, but also in order to adapt itself more easily to the process of its own down-sliding. Whoever wants to understand this will not subject me to the cheap reproach that I have connected the criticism of the draft program with an unmasking of the legend of Trotskyism. The present draft program has originated entirely in an ideological period that was filled with this legend. The authors of the draft fed themselves for the most part on this legend, always proceeded from it, and utilized it as the measuring rod of all things. The whole draft reflects this period.

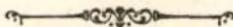
Political history has been enriched by a new, quite extraordinarily instructive chapter. It might be characterized as the chapter of the power of myth-creating, or more simply, "ideological calumny as a political weapon". As experience has taught, this weapon need not be underestimated. The leap from the realm of freedom is far from behind us. We live in a class society which is unthinkable without darkness, prejudice and superstition. The myth that corresponds to certain interests or traditional customs can always preserve a great power in a class society. But with a myth alone, even if it is ever so planfully organized and disposes of all the resources of state power, no great policy can be carried on. Least of all a revolutionary policy, especially in our epoch of brusque changes.

Myth-creating must unfailingly become entangled in its own contradictions. A small part, even if perhaps the most important, of these contradictions, I have already named. Quite independent of whether external conditions will permit me to carry out the task to the end, I firmly

to the Communist party section by section. The axis of Communist policy will shift ever more from Right to Left. Simultaneous with this, the demand of the Opposition, which, since the defeat of the German proletariat towards the end of 1923, has understood how to swim against the stream despite the hail of accusations and persecutions, for a consistent Bolshevist line will ring ever more loudly.

The organizational road over which the idea of real unfalsified Leninism will triumph in the Comintern as well as in the whole international proletariat, depends in a high degree upon the present leadership of the Comintern and consequently, directly upon the Sixth Congress.

No matter how the decision of the latter may turn out—we are prepared for the worst—the estimation of the present epoch and its inner tendencies and especially the evaluation of the experiences of the last five years prove to us that *the Opposition needs no other soil than that of the Communist International. No one will succeed in tearing us away from it. Our ideas will become its ideas and they will find their expression in the program of the Comintern.*



The MILITANT

Organ of the Communist League of America



The Militant is the only American paper that reviews events in the class struggle in this and other countries and analyzes them from a Marxian point of view. It expresses the opinions of the Communist Opposition, and is invaluable as a record of its activities and standpoint on current problems of the working class of the world. The writings of Leon Trotsky and other leaders of the Russian and International Left Opposition appear in its columns.



A one year subscription, which includes fifty-two issues, is two dollars. Send all funds to

THE MILITANT

25 Third Avenue

New York, N. Y.