

# Some Questions of Comintern and C.P.S.U. Policy

The article below is part of the post-conference discussion on the general line and inner-party course of the C.P.S.U. being conducted by the Communist Party of the U.S.A. (Opposition). All comrades and readers of the "Age" are invited to participate. Articles are limited to 1,000 words.—Editor.

Every Communist organization should, from time to time, discuss in a critical manner some of the most important problems confronting it. Such a discussion, conducted in an objective manner, even if serious differences manifest themselves in the course of it, can only help clarify and explain the policies of the organization, with resulting improvement in its work. It is the absence of such discussions from the ranks of the Communist Party today which makes it so extremely difficult for even the most serious and outstanding errors to be corrected. Within the ranks of the Communist Opposition we can never tolerate such a system. Should serious differences arise, far from suppressing them, it is the duty of the leadership to bring them to the open, and, in the course of comradely discussion, endeavor to eliminate them. The present discussion on the "Russian question," which the Communist Opposition is conducting, will no doubt help hundreds of Communists and revolutionary workers to a better understanding of this important question.

## The Source of Many Difficulties

It seems that a good deal of the confusion on the "Russian question" is due to a mechanical unification of this question with the problems confronting the Communists in the capitalist countries, a sort of inverted Stalinism. Comrades start from the generally accepted (in our group, of course) viewpoint, that the general line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on questions of Communist policy in capitalist countries, as expressed in the general line of the Communist International (which, we can agree, is largely determined by the C.P.S.U.), is incorrect. This line is ultra-left, that is, it tends to push forward Communist tactics at a pace so rapid as to isolate the Communists from the working masses. These tactics are, at present, advanced to an extent absolutely unjustified by the general conditions obtaining in most capitalist countries. And, on a number of specific matters, these tactics represent a departure from some of the accepted Leninist tactical principles. Starting from this generally correct criticism, comrades then ask: "How is it possible for this same party to be so wrong everywhere else, and right in Russia?" And they answer for themselves, that it must therefore be wrong also in Russia. The Stalinist method of argument is that, because the Russian party has been demonstrated to be generally correct in Russia, it must necessarily be correct also in other countries. We see that both these arguments are the same. It is one stick, but Stalin is holding it by the thick end and the comrades referred to are holding it by the thin end. The Communist Opposition has rejected and must reject the mechanical and rigid "logic" represented by this stick. We draw a sharp line of distinction between general Communist policy, as applied in the Soviet Union, where the building of socialism is proceeding, and in the capitalist countries, where we are still struggling for the overthrow of capitalism, or, to be more exact, where (in most countries) our task is not yet even the overthrow of capitalism but the development of the Communist Parties into mass parties. To mechanically unite the tactics in the Soviet Union with those in the capitalist countries, is to determine in advance that such tactics will be wrong in one or the other place. At present they are wrong in the capitalist countries because the thick end of the stick is in Stalin's hands, but the comrades who propose to reverse the stick and subordinate Soviet tac-

tics to those in the capitalist countries, are not offering a solution; they are merely guaranteeing in advance incorrect tactics for the Soviet Union. The Communist Opposition stands for the elimination of the stick from the relations between the C.P.S.U. and the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries.

## About "Turns and Twists"

We cannot be opposed to "turns and twists" in policy in principle. The class struggle does not develop in a straight line at a uniform pace and Communist policy, to be correct, must follow the development of the class struggle. This necessitates advances and retreats, zig-zags and straight lines, advancing at express speed or at a snail's pace. The same is true in the Soviet Union in the building of socialism, but there is no relation between the two. (Nor is there any absolute relation among the capitalist countries.) At the same time that it is necessary to advance in the Soviet Union, it may be necessary to retreat in a capitalist country. At the present time, an advance is taking place all along the line, and at a rapid tempo, in the Soviet Union. Do the realities of the class struggle in the capitalist countries necessitate a similar advance? Obviously not! It is just

## In the Post-Conference Discussion

by Herbert Zam

as ridiculous to demand an advance in the capitalist countries, because of conditions in the Soviet Union, as the leaders of the C. P. S. U. are doing, as to demand a slowing up or change in the socialist advance in the Soviet Union, because of the slow development of the revolution in the capitalist countries, as some of the comrades are doing in the present discussion. Of course, the comrades will indignantly deny this. But so will Stalin, Molotov, and the others deny that they are subordinating international Communist policy to Soviet Communist policy. This is not a conscious process. Stalin, Molotov and the other Soviet comrades are influenced largely by developments in the Soviet Union, and their ideas come to predominate in the Communist International, due to the narrowing of leadership and the incorrect mutual relations between the C. P. S. U. and the other parties. In a similar manner, the comrades here are influenced largely by the developments here and are unconsciously transferring their political conclusions to the discussion on the "Russian question". This represents a great danger from both directions which should be guarded against. The "gap theory", upon which the Com-

munist Opposition bases its political conclusions and whose logic I have tried to follow in the foregoing lines, represents the weapon which we must utilize.

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## Essentials And Non-Essentials

Another error which comrades are apt to make is neglect essentials and to argue over matters of secondary importance. They cannot "see the forest for the trees." They argue about this or that factory, or railway, or collective farm; they cannot see that it is just as absurd for the comrades here to try to draw conclusions from such incidents, or to give advice about them, as it is for Stalin, let us say, to try to determine what the tactics of the Communists should be in Local 22 of the I. L. G. W. U. In our estimates of Soviet developments, we must confine ourselves to the main lines of development represented by the Five-Year Plan, which is already successful beyond all expectations. The hardships and difficulties, inherent in the transition period, and expressing themselves in a sharp form during the last period which marked a sharp break in the direction of building socialism, will be largely eliminated in the Second Five-Year Plan, on the basis of the achievements of the First. But the comrades who sigh about

the "tightening of the belt" should remember that, without it, the Five-Year Plan itself would have been impossible, which would have meant hardships and difficulties of an even greater and more intense character a little later, lasting for a longer period of time. The strain, the sacrifices, the hardships, which the first mighty effort at the building of socialism called forth, have already justified themselves.

The resolution of the National Committee on the "Russian question" is correct. It refuses to be led off the track of objective, Leninist analysis by motives of revenge or factional bitterness. It refuses to blind itself to the wrong regime in the C. P. S. U. even while endorsing the general line of that party. It refuses to make the fight of the International Communist Opposition a function of differences or struggle inside the C. P. S. U. Only firm adherence to this policy will make possible the victory of the ideas of our group.

## THE A. F. L. "TURNS LEFT!"

(Continued from Page 3)  
perhaps even turn into a boomérang, bringing disillusionment and demoralization in the wake of passivity.

## The Significance Of The Convention

It would be a major error to estimate the Cincinnati convention in an abstract, static manner, to limit ourselves to what is perfectly correct, that Green and Company have not changed heart, that they are still in all essentials labor lieutenants of Big Business. True enough; but that is not what is new in the present situation, that is not what is *specific* in the present relation of forces. Let us learn from our enemies. The "New York Times", in its issue of November 30, comments editorially in a very significant manner on what happened at Cincinnati:

"Such a militant attitude (as exhibited at the convention.—W. H.) is fortunate. It cannot fail to be disturbing to all who have thought of the American Federation of Labor, under its present leadership, as inclined . . . (to) carefully studied means and . . . conciliatory methods . . . At the moment when all should be trying to work together, when the order of the day ought always be . . . cooperation between labor and capital, President Green's extravagant and menacing words sound like bells jangled out of tune."

For the militant workers the meaning of the Cincinnati convention is very great indeed. It calls striking attention to the growth of unrest and militancy in the ranks of the conservative unions, still unformed and vague but tremendous in its potentialities. It marks a definite retreat on the part of the labor officialdom. But, most important of all, it points the way to a magnificent opportunity for the left wing and progressive forces in the A. F. of L. Upon the effectiveness of these forces will depend, in the long run, whether the concessions wrung from the reactionary bureaucrats in Cincinnati will be turned into anything of value for the American workers!

ting the situation in India today and therefore we must give up the slogan of "Constituent Assembly" which, in his opinion, was confusing and attracting the petty middle classes. I told him that that slogan of "Soviets" must be linked up with the slogan of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" and, when we are organizing the anti-imperialist movement on the slogan of national-democratic revolution, the slogan of "Soviets" would not fit in.

K.

## The Advance Of Communism In India

# SOME PROBLEMS OF THE REVOLUTION IN INDIA

We publish below extracts from a recent letter from India. Comrade K., the writer of the letter, is one of the leading figures in the growing Communist Opposition in India. The Indian Communist Opposition is slowly recovering from the disastrous blow of the arrest and imprisonment of M. N. Roy. It has already established itself as the dominant Communist organization in the political and trade union life of India.—Editor.

Bombay, India,  
September, 10, 1932.

You must, I believe, have heard about the arrest of several of our comrades in various parts of the country. In Bombay, where we are very strong, the attack on us was very prominent. Those of our comrades who are active workers in the trade union movement were charged under Section 124 a (sedition) and Section 153 (creating class hatred). Four of our comrades have been convicted for one year of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of 300 Rupees. All these comrades were at the head of the unions such as Girni Kamgar Union ("Red Flag Union"—a textile union.—Editor), the Seamen's Union, the Dock Workers Union and the Municipal Workers Union. The arrest of these comrades took place at a time when the unity conference of the trade union movement was to meet. The reformists, afraid of our forces, did not dare hold the conference in Bombay and shifted the place to Madras. The arrest of all these comrades, who would have presented a united front at the conference against the reformists, removed them and only one representative from Bombay and a few from Madras could form a revolutionary opposition inside the conference. Moreover, the Executive Committee of the All-India Trade Union Congress, too, was to meet and possibly the government did not like the presence of these comrades on this committee which was to be followed by the twelfth session of the A. I. T. U. C. at Madras. Those trade unionists who have some inclinations towards us were cast into prison at this critical moment. Most of them and our comrades were alleged by the government lawyers to be the followers of M.

by K. (Bombay)

N. Roy, adhering to his political and trade union point of view, although some of them do not go along with us fully.

Although deprived of practically the whole of its executive and of most of its active workers, the trade union congress twelfth session had to meet under all circumstances. In Bombay the places of the arrested comrades were immediately filled by the second line of defense and thus today, when I am writing to you, the Trade Union Congress is meeting at twelfth session in Madras.

It is expected that the Trade Union Congress will adopt the Platform of Unity of the Girni Kamgar Union and will call upon the various unions to unite under the banner of the A. I. T. U. C. Moreover, this session will bring in more unions which were neutral all these months.

## Our Campaign Of Unity

All along the campaign of unity in the ranks of the trade union movement in India, we have press-

ed for the acceptance of the Girni Kamgar Union platform. We carried on an agitation for the withdrawal of attacks made on the Communists by the reformists in the report of the Trade Union Unity Conference, and for the deletion of various reactionary suggestions made therein, viz., non-violence, "legitimate" methods in the trade union work, etc. The comrades of our fraction in the trade union movement were of the opinion that to break away from the Trade Union Congress, or from the Trade Union Congress, if our point of view was not accepted, would be a fatal mistake. We showed our intense desire for unity in the ranks of the labor movement on the basis of the principles of class struggle as formulated in the G. K. U. platform of unity. And to break away from the Trade Union Congress would be falling in line with the ultra-leftists who have isolated themselves from the labor movement as well as from the movement for national liberation.

## Building The Party

The efforts in the direction of creating more party groups continue and are pushed vigorously. Some of the remnants of the official line have nefariously disrupted some of our work and, on the other hand, the "law and order" crowd too is not slow in dealing a blow at us.

We shall soon come out as an All-India organization—that is, the All India Communist Party or the Revolutionary Party of the Indian Working Class (R.P.I.W.C.). The draft program has been circulated for acceptance and is now in print and will be available for the members and various groups in the country.

There is a big controversy about tactics, methods and program of the C. P. between ourselves and the remnants of the official line. Some time back a fellow came from England. I knew him when I was in Frankfurt at the Anti-Imperialist Conference in 1928. He is an Indian. I met and I had a talk with him. When he saw the reality of the situation here he became to certain extent disillusioned about the line of the official leaders. But he insisted that the slogan of the "Soviets" was fit-

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