

Against a "New" Party And a "Fourth" Int'l

by Will Herberg

One thing at least is clear from the statement of the minority of the National Committee published in the last issue of *The Workers Age* and from the article of Comrade Zam in this issue: The minority believes that we should take the course of the formation of a new party in the United States and other capitalist countries and a new International on a world scale. But why the minority insists on this fundamental change of orientation, why Comrade Zam suddenly veers to a view which he has fought for many years, this remains a deep and dark mystery! But it is precisely this mystery that Comrade Zam must dispell if he wants the group to take his contentions seriously.

In his two documents Comrade Zam presents the following "reasons" for a change of orientation: (1) "At the present time the Communist Party (Opposition) is faced with the need for a reexamination of its main course. In the four-and-a-half years of our existence, we have had valuable experiences bearing on our perspective. To these experiences have now been added the experiences of the Oppositions in other countries and (2) particularly the recent events in Germany. . . ." Our orientation as a group was "of great value in the first stages of the struggle" but it has now become obsolete. (3) A group in its very nature, declares Comrade Zam in his statement, is "unstable"—it tends to become either an ingrown sect (like the Trotskyites) or else really a party without the name (like the C. P. O.)

Are these statements "reasons" or mere empty verbiage devoid of meaning? To mention "four-and-a-half years experience" and let it go at that, is hardly enough. What happened in these four-and-a-half years of experience of our group in America to require a change of orientation? What marks this "new stage"? Our perspective has not been realized, says Zam; that is, we have not yet either won the party or become the party! But what makes four-and-a-half years a magic number? Why, at this point, must we despair of our course? Why not one year, two years, five years? To speak abstractly of "dead formulas and living realities" is all very fine but gets us exactly nowhere.

At this point Comrade Zam introduces a curious argument. Precisely because we have made much headway in our mass work and in building up our group under our old orientation, he declared in the course of the discussion in a New York unit, must we now change it because it has now become an "obstacle"! Believe it or not!

But then there is Germany! We must change our orientation because the "German catastrophe is only a forerunner of similar catastrophes for the Communist movement in other capitalist countries if the present course is continued and if the Communist Opposition does not succeed in developing an instrument with which to counteract the catastrophic results of the ultra-leftist policies of the official Communist parties." Perfectly true! But this was equally true and equally obvious a year ago. Did not Zam know then what was going to happen in Germany, that the catastrophe would come unless the German Opposition would be able in time to counteract the effects of the party's ultra-leftism? Obviously! What Zam does not show, and what it is absolutely essential for him to prove to justify his right-about-face, is that as a group we cannot, in the nature of the case, overcome the ultra-leftism of the party. That the C.P.G.-O. did not succeed in doing so by no argument, for Comrade Zam knows from his own experience that insuperable objective conditions often lead to failure in spite of a correct orientation and sound tactics. Here again Comrade Zam calmly proceeds to assume what he has to prove. Why is a new party

the only way to overcome the ultra-leftism of the official party and to avoid the threatening catastrophe?

The argument of the "instability of a group as a group" is too absurd to take seriously. Comrade Zam does not seem to realize that, if it is true, then we have been a party in fact for many years now. Why, then a new orientation?

I return to the original question: Why a new party, Comrade Zam?

* * *

One of Comrade Zam's "big issues" is the claim that there is a bad contradiction in declaring, on the one hand, that the party is more amenable than ever to Opposition influence today, while making it clear, on the other hand, that the party leadership is reverting to the old "third-period" lunacies? But where is the contradiction? Precisely the reversion to the insanities of 1929, in the present situation (the events in Germany, the recent developments in the American labor movement, etc.), is what is making the party membership more accessible to our influence. Look at Germany! The German Opposition has tremendously improved its relations with the C. P. members and lower organizations not only because, in some instances (the trade union question, for example), the official party leaders have veered in its direction, but also and perhaps primarily because the official party leadership and the Comintern, in the face of desperate reality, insist on justifying the suicidally disastrous tactics which led to the awful catastrophe. We should learn from Germany, Comrade Zam!

* * *

The inextricable contradictions in which Comrade Zam involves himself are strikingly obvious when his "arguments" rise to an international level. He consumes whole paragraphs to prove that the present official C.P.s are "hopeless", are increasingly inaccessible to our Opposition influence. Then suddenly we discover that his new International is to be a "temporary measure"! "Temporary" until when—until the "hopeless" Comintern sections are rehabilitated, until the "inaccessible" Comintern sections are won? It seems that the old devil of the perspective of winning the official C.P.s rises again! How come, Comrade Zam?

Furthermore, Comrade Zam's new International would, he insists, have no section in the Soviet Union. This determination does much more credit to Comrade Zam's revolutionary heart than to his Marxist head. Why, if the parties headed by Browder and Thaelmann are "hopeless", is not the party headed by Stalin, whose puppets the former are? We have always pointed out that the root source of the crisis in the Comintern is the monopoly of leadership held by the C.P.S.U. (the Stalin group) in the C.I., the fact that the Comintern parties are mere mechanical extensions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, completely dominated by the leadership of the latter and without any independent political life of their own. Comrade Zam is ready to make a heroic renunciation of the tail as "hopeless" but somehow he seems to quail before the dog itself.

Finally, what kind of International would Comrade Zam's be without a section in the Soviet Union? He himself says it would be a "kind of new Communist International"—a very curious characterization indeed! A Communist International is supposed to be the international general staff of the world revolution but it would not include representation from the very citadel of the world revolution, from the country of the first proletarian state! An International without a Soviet section would either be no International at all or else it would be an anti-Communist body, living only by virtue of an inevitable anti-Soviet orientation. This is the most obvious logic of class politics!

And what would be the natural character of Comrade Zam's new

(Continued on Page 7)

parties if the International Communist Opposition plays a positive and constructive role in their formation and development.

AGAINST THE "NEW" PARTY VIEWS

(Continued from Page 6)

party if, by any miracle, it ever came to acquire a bodily existence? Such a party would be "based on Communist fundamentals and internal party democracy and not on the tactical and strategical platform of one of the groups or tendencies of Communism." But obviously the official party (Stalin) tendency would not adhere to Comrade Zam's party. It would then become a mere anti-Stalinite block, the various elements having nothing in common except their opposition to Stalin, each for its own reasons. It would become a veritable sewer for all the disreputable odds and ends in the left wing of the American labor movement, bound together by a tie of a very questionable political character, a tie which will often be hard enough to distinguish from plain anti-Sovietism!

At the slightest provocation Comrade Zam waxes indignant about the "Red herring of Trotskyism". "Is this a discussion with the minority or is it a debate with the Trotskyites?" Comrade Zam asks rhetorically. Neither, Comrade Zam! It is a discussion of the international situation and the tasks of the Communist Opposition. And in this discussion the new aspect of Trotskyism and the plans and partly accomplished deeds of the Trotskyites in the direction of a "new international labor movement" in partnership with the centrists, are perhaps at least as important as Comrade Zam's ill-digested outbursts. Is it not monumental conceit to insist that the discussion be limited exclusively to Comrade Zam's alleged "arguments"?

But there is a deeper reason why Trotskyism must inevitably come to the fore in any discussion of the present situation in the interna-

tional labor movement. Under its present aspect, Trotskyism represents the only logically self-consistent and thought-out theory for a new party and a new International. This theory is based on totally false, even anti-Communist, premises but that only makes more striking its thoroughgoing character, its refusal to shy at "unpleasant" consequences. It goes the whole hog and therefore it shows the way to the more timid brethren. Comrade Zam once lectured Comrade Gitlow on the "objective logic of his step" and brushed aside the latter's indignant protestations with the perfectly correct remark: "It isn't where you want to go that counts; it is where the objective logic of your course is driving you!" And today, Comrade Gitlow who left our group because, forsooth, we were "tending to Trotskyism", is openly negotiating with the Trotskyites for a merger!

Comrade Zam could do worse than to apply his political warnings of 1932 to himself and to the minority of today!

The NRA And Labor

by Will Herberg

5 CENTS

Order From

WORKERS AGE
51 West 14th Street
New York City

GERMAN FASCISM AND THE WORKERS

by Leo (Berlin)

5c a copy

3 cents in bundles

WORKERS AGE
51 West 14th Street
New York City