

For a New Perspective for Our Group

Statement Of The National Committee Minority

We publish below the declaration of the minority of the National Committee of the C.P.-O., consisting of Comrade Zam, on the international situation and the recent conference of the I.C.O.—Editor.

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1. When our group was first established it definitely rejected the objective of the establishment of a new Communist Party and worked to restore the Communist Party of the U. S. A. to a Leninist line. Even at that time, however, the perspective of a new Communist Party was not entirely excluded. We had a dual perspective: Either (a) our efforts to win the party to a Leninist line would be successful and unity would be established in that manner, or (b) the C. P. thru its wrong line, would continue disintegrating, would become a "shell" and our group, having the correct line, would continue to grow and gain in influence. We therefore would become a party. Now, after four years of bitter experience, we must frankly declare that neither of these perspective have seen fulfillment in reality. What is true in the United States is also true on an international scale for the Communist International and for the International Communist Opposition.

2. Already at our last conference (September, 1932) we were beginning to modify somewhat this so-called dual perspective in the light of the experiences of our struggle. We substituted the slogan: "For International Communist Unity" in place of the one previously held: "For the return of the Comintern to the tactical line of Leninism", in order to make possible a more inclusive struggle and more realistic tactics, particularly in relation to forces which had not previously been in the Communist movement.

3. The initial steps we took a year ago in changing our perspective have been given tremendous impetus by the catastrophe in Germany. The German events not

merely express the most decisive defeat for the working class in the entire post-war period, they at the same time signalize the utter collapse of the policies of the Communist International, policies which, in the critical situation in Germany, became an objective aid in the defeat of the working class and of the revolutionary movement. This cannot be condoned by the adherence of the bearer of these policies to the proletarian dictatorship, any more than the scab activities of the "revolutionary" trade unions in Paterson can be condoned because they call themselves "revolutionary". At the same time, the German events also signalize the close of the first phase of the struggle of the Communist Opposition—a phase during which we considered ourselves as a faction of the Communist Party, temporarily separated from the party, fighting to correct the line of the party thru the pressure which we should develop.

4. Lenin said: "It too often happens that when events take a sudden turn, even an advanced party cannot adapt itself to the new conditions. It goes on repeating yesterday's watchwords, watchwords which, under the new circumstances, have become empty of meaning and which have lost meaning unexpectedly, just in proportion as the change in events has been unexpected. It is necessary to direct ourselves, not by old formulas, but by new realities."

This is the situation in which the International Communist Opposition movement now finds itself. To continue along yesterday's path today leads only into a blind alley. Yesterday's tactic has become historically outlived. A new one is needed.

5. Our general objective, the establishment of international Communist unity, remains the same but, in view of the defeat of our efforts to change the policies and methods of work of the Communist International by acting as a faction, it is now necessary that the

attainment of this objective be brought about by other means. Only one alternative is now open to us if we are to harness our energies for effective activity for Communist unity—we must direct ourselves toward the development of forces for the establishment in this country of a new Communist Party to continue the struggle for international Communist unity on a higher plane. There can be no thought either of establishing such a party at once or of the group becoming such a party. Nevertheless, this new perspective must be definitely stated, as the entire direction of our future activities depend on it.

6. The adoption of this new perspective, in view of the extended nature of our struggle, was inevitable even without the intervention of the German events. A faction existing outside the party over a long period of time and carrying on independent mass work tends to develop into a party. Already a year ago we were probing this perspective. The German events simply speeded up this development. The essential difference between a party and a faction is not merely a numerical relation, altho this is a very important consideration. A party is united by fundamental principle but within the party there is not necessarily any unity on the tactical and strategic course. Within a party, or even outside a party, factions grow up basing themselves not merely on the fundamentals, which are sufficient for membership in the party, but in addition on agreement on the current strategical and tactical problems confronting a party. In the normal course of events, these factions can be liquidated thru inner-party struggle. But, when the factions are involuntarily separated from the party and carry on an independent existence and activity, new differences tend to arise within the faction and the homogeneity of the faction on current problems disappears.

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pers—the faction either prohibits such differences and grows narrower in composition, as has been the case with the Trotskyites, or it permits such differences and tends itself to lose its character as a faction and become a small party, regardless of the name it gives itself. This has been the case of the C. P.-O.

7. For the C.P.O. the problem of a new party is not a principle but a tactic. We do maintain that from a class standpoint there can be only one Communist party in each country. But this does not mean that there cannot be more than one such party for any given length of time. As a matter of fact, in this country there have been times when two Communist parties existed simultaneously. In fact this was the normal condition in the first few years of the existence of the Communist movement in this country. This has also been true in other countries and in the present period we have seen the simultaneous existence of two Communist parties in Sweden and Spain and Alsace. In 1920 Lenin advocated the formation of two Communist parties in England as a means of overcoming the differences of the Communists on tactical questions. It is true that in those days the parallel existence of Communist parties was a symptom of the formative character of the Communist movement but can anyone deny that today we are also going thru a formative process, which is the positive feature of the present crisis in the Communist movement?

8. The rejection of the new party idea in principle, as is in fact done by some comrades ("No new parties where Communist parties exist"—Lovestone; "Against new parties"—I.C.O.) is based on the erroneous conception that the official Communist parties and the Communist International are the sole representatives of Bolshevism. Should this standpoint be adopted by the Communist Opposition there would be left no alternative but to liquidate and return to the Comintern. It is just as necessary to reject this conception as that of the Trotskyites, that the Communist International and the official Communist parties are counter-revolutionary. The adoption of either conception excludes any struggle for Communist unity and would substitute instead the idea that the entire Communist movement and all its problems revolve around one of its factions. For this reason also it is necessary to reject the August 1912 block analogy adopted by the Buro of the I.C.O.

9. The adoption of the perspective of a new party in other countries depends entirely on the con-

ditions there. In Germany, Alsace, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Spain (in some of these countries parallel C. P.'s actually exist), there can be not the slightest doubt that the time has arrived for coming out on this new basis. It is necessary to emphasize, however, that a new Communist party can not result from one of the opposition groups declaring itself such but from a regrouping of forces on the basis of Communist fundamentals and internal party democracy, the problems of strategy and tactics to be decided thru inner-party discussion on a democratic basis.

10. There can be no talk of the creation of a new Communist party in the Soviet Union where the power is in the hands of the proletariat. A new party there can only be the equivalent to a struggle for power, that is, civil war. Consequently all those rejecting civil war in the Soviet Union as a means of settling differences on Russian questions, all those who recognize the proletarian character of the Soviet state, must reject the proposal for a new party in the Soviet Union. Nor does the advocacy of new Communist parties in the capitalist countries automatically lead to such a conclusion for the Soviet Union.

11. A new International will necessarily result from the establishment of a whole series of new Communist parties in capitalist countries, which are willing to cooperate on an international scale. Such an International will be a positive factor in the future of the working class and of the Communist movement if it is based on the lines here laid down for individual parties. It must necessarily exclude any group claiming to be a "Russian section" and will necessarily be an international center for Communist parties in capitalist countries only. This is neither a normal, nor a welcome, nor a permanent phenomenon but it is forced upon the Communist Opposition by the negative role played by the C.P.S.U. in the International Communist movement. A rejection of a new International because from it would be excluded the C.P.S.U. is an abandonment of our own "gap" theory. The new International, if it ever becomes a reality, must be an international instrument in the struggle for Communist unity. At the present time, however, the conditions for the immediate establishment of such an international do not yet exist.

12. The Communist Party (Opposition) reiterates its evaluation of Trotskyism as adopted at the last conference and for that reason it rejects the "new" evaluation adopted by the Buro of the I.C.O., just

as we rejected the first attempts at this new evaluation last year. The latest documents of the Trotsky group bear out the correctness of this evaluation—that is, the left sectarian character of the Trotsky group. This is embodied in their "eleven points" and in their declaration for a new International, in which they endeavor to base such a new International not on the fundamentals of Communism, but on the well-thumbed Trotskyite dogmas which they endeavor to raise to the new level of fundamental Marxian "principles." The flirtations of Trotskyites with various centrist and near-Communist organizations is no more indication of their abandonment of Communism than the alliance of the Communist Party with the C.P.L.A. It is necessary to repeat that, on one point, Thermidor, in whatever form, the Trotskyites separate themselves from the rest of the Communist movement. An abandonment of this point is the only condition for their admission into a united Communist movement and this must also be the condition with regard to a new Communist Party.

At the present time, the effects of the crisis have caused thousands of workers to abandon their Social-democratic illusions, while the sectarian course of the Communist parties made it difficult for them to move to Communism. Consequently, a whole series of centrist parties has developed, differing in many essential characteristics from classical centrism (Austro-Marxism). This centrism still bears a dual character, but differs from the centrist parties of the period of 1920-1922 as follows: At that time there was a powerful movement of the workers to the Communist International, so powerful indeed that the C. I. was compelled to take measures to keep out some elements; consequently the main characteristic of the centrist parties was to prevent the working class from breaking with Social-democracy. At the present time, however, there is no powerful movement to the Comintern but there is the opposite movement. Consequently the centrist parties, to the extent that they help break the workers from Social-democracy, are performing a function which the Communist parties cannot do. Of course, the centrist parties still remain centrist parties but the latter characteristic as well as the entire situation, and the fact of the continual leftward movement of these parties (for instance the I.L.P.), necessitate a new tactic in our attitude toward them—a tactic aiming at the conversion of these parties to Communism rather than their destruction and the absorption of their masses in the Communist parties. In

the course of working out this tactic concretely, the unity of the centrist parties will undoubtedly be destroyed but it holds greater promise of gains for Communism than the pursuit of the older but today outworn tactic of the destruction of the centrist parties.

14. In connection with the above problems the C.P.-O. must express itself on a series of concrete issues which threaten not only to destroy the I.C.O. but also to bring great damage to the international Communist movement.

(a) The C.P.-O. stands for the maintenance of the unity of the I.C.O. It therefore differentiates itself from the measures which have resulted in the "expulsion" of the Communist Party of Sweden from the I.C.O., while at the same time not endorsing the standpoint of the Swedish comrades on the various controversial questions. Realizing that this is a period when the greatest freedom of discussion is not only necessary but unavoidable, during which it might even be necessary to forego certain measures of formal discipline, the C.P.-O. regrets that steps have been taken by the Buro of the I.C.O. which lay it open to the attack of Comintern methods. The C.P.-O. urges that these measures be rescinded and all differences submitted to a thoro discussion of the entire membership of the various groups of the I.C.O.

(b) The C.P.-O. is of the opinion that a serious error was committed by the Buro of the I.C.O. in not attending the Paris conference of independent parties and groups. We believe that this was an act of sectarian isolation. Regardless of the differences the Buro had with the purpose of this conference, it would in no way have committed itself to anything by attending, while at the same time it would have had a splendid opportunity of strengthening its ties with other groups and of presenting its position to large sections of workers unacquainted with it.

(c) The C.P.-O. rejects the proposal of the Buro of the I. C. O. for a block with the Comintern against Trotskyites and the centrists in defence of Bolshevism. Such a block presupposes that the Comintern at present is capable of defending Bolshevism against its enemies, and that it recognizes us as the defenders of Bolshevism. If either of these premises were correct, then automatically the need for such a block would disappear, for then organic unity would be possible. These premises do not exist. Consequently the achievement of such a block, which is highly impracticable, would also become unprincipled.

(d) The policy of the I.C.O. with regard to the I.L.P. of England

("Against a new party") must result disastrously for the I.C.O. and can only help throw the leftward moving workers into the arms either of the Comintern or of the Trotskyites. We cannot propose to a party which is in the process of becoming a Communist party, that it act only as a faction of a much smaller party, or as a faction of an International which refuses it admittance. The cause of Communist unity can best be served in England and internationally by the I. L. P. declaring itself a Communist Party, entering the struggle for Communist unity as a party and proposing to the Comintern, as a condition for unity, the abandonment of the sectarian course and bureaucratic regime. The I. C. O. must work in this direction.

(e) While we have correctly struggled against a situation in the International Communist movement where one party (the Soviet Party) has assumed a monopoly of leadership in the international movement, we have not been sufficiently careful to combat similar tendencies in the I.C.O., where the German group has more and more tended to assume a monopoly of leadership in the I.C.O.—quite possibly not voluntarily so, but as a result of actual relations. This situation must be changed by taking the necessary political and organizational measures (location of I.C.O. center, composition of leading body, etc.)

THE C. P. AND THE NEEDLE STRIKE IN HARTFORD

Hartford, Conn.

In Hartford over 400 needle workers walked out on a strike for better working conditions, higher wages, against the sweatshops and for the recognition of the union. The Communist Party was out of the picture. They had to do something about the strike. At first they sent their people to talk to the girls. They tried to discredit our comrades. They had the intention to demoralize the workers. We saw to it that they were removed from the meeting place. Then they printed a leaflet urging the strikers not to trust the leaders, telling them to join the N.T. W.I.U. The women refused to listen to them. They tore up the leaflets.

In the cleaning and dyeing industry the party was able to secure the leadership. The local newspapers came out with a story about the T.U.U.L. being a Communist organization. The T.U.U.L. denied the fact. The reporter of the "Hartford Courant" went to the union headquarters and found on the walls the following pictures: Mexican Revolution, Hunger Marches, Death of Harry Simms. Of course no denial will take the "Red" scare away.