Documents of the International Communist Opposition

Document No. 1

Platform of the International Communist Opposition

Adopted at the International Conference of the International Communist Opposition, December 1930.

Basic Principles

The International Communist Opposition stands on the basis of the fundamentals of Communism. It fights for:

1. The establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the form of the Soviet state as the necessary transition to a classless Socialist society.

2. The defense of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state. The Communist Opposition regards the consolidation of the Communist Parties and movements in the individual countries into a united Communist Party, into the Communist International as indispensable. The organizational foundation of the Communist International as well as its sections is democratic centralism. Revolutionary discipline, based upon democratic centralism, is the indispensable binding force of the Communist International and Parties.

Democratic Centralism means:

1. That the decisions are arrived at on the basis of the discussions and the participation of the Party membership. The discussion must, of course, take place within the bounds of Communist fundamentals.

2. That the functionaries of the Party be elected by the membership and can be removed by the membership at any time in the proper manner.

3. That the decisions arrived at by the Party committees in such a manner are unconditionally binding upon the membership.

4. That during any action, discussion as to the necessity of the action (but not as to the manner of carrying it thru) cannot take place.

5. That after its conclusion every action is subject to discussion and examination by the membership.

Revolutionary discipline must serve the carrying out of correct Communist policy. But if discipline stands in the service of a false policy, then it becomes mere grotesque foolishness (Lenin). Whereas, with a correct Communist policy, the formation of fractions and tendencies is impermissible in a Communist Party, yet when the attempt is made to put thru a wrong policy by disciplinary measures, the formation of fractions becomes a revolutionary duty. Discipline within a Communist fraction or tendency must be even stricter than within a Communist Party.

II

The International Communist Opposition carries on an uncompromising struggle against open reformism and against hidden reformism (centrism). Its aim is the complete destruction of the influence of reformism upon the workingclass.

III

The International Communist Opposition aims at neither building a new Communist Party nor a new Communist International.

It aims to overcome the crisis of the existing parties of the Communist International and in the Communist International as a whole, to save and to restore to health the Communist world movement, to reestablish its unity and fighting power upon the tactical principles of Leninism.

1. Where the Communist Opposition wins the majority of the Communist Party and where the Communist International organizes a counter-party against it, there the Communist Opposition takes over the fullest extent the tasks of the Communist Party. It has the task of eliminating the minority outside of its ranks as a separate organization.

In this case, the Communist Opposition is on a National scale, a component part of the International Communist tendency.

2. Where the Communist Party (ultra-left tendency) is rooted among the masses or as a mass party, there the Communist Opposition, organized as a Communist tendency, has the objective of winning the Party.

3. In a country where the official Communist tendency is not rooted among the masses, the chief task of the Communist Opposition is to create the basis for a Communist mass party out of the existing elements.

IV

The International Communist Opposition, whether inside the Party or expelled, whether minority or majority of the Communist Parties, is therefore a part of the

Communist International and its tactical tendency of Communism.

V

The International Communist Opposition, having the ultra-left course of the Communist sections which represents a break with Leninism, which contradicts the struggle practically in its present form. Communist Parties incapable of replacing the leadership of the workingclass, of leading the majority of the workingclass for finally destroys the Communist Opposition, paralyzing the independence of the Communist Parties, in the Party bureaucracy. The Communist Opposition fights all attempts to carry through bureaucratic elimination of the Party bureaucracy.

Situation of World War

The International Communist Opposition views and demands upon the situation of world capitalism.

The chief stages in the development of the World War are the following:

1. The post-war crisis, which will express itself in the absolute decline in world trade, in the credit in the collapse of fixed number of countries. The first onset of revolution led to the establishment of a dictatorship in the Soviet Union, developing proletarian revolution.

2. The open outbreak of the world revolution in bourgeois counter-revolution, hobbled to the still unsolved tasks of (Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia) open outbreak of the world revolution in the political domination of the M. of the outside the Soviet Union.

The close of the first stage of revolutionary has been accomplished in Europe by the occupation of the factories in 1923-24 in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and in the Chiappini miners in Italy.

3. The so-called solution of the problem of the world revolution, reestablishment of the domination of the bourgeoisie through the mixture of workers and peasants by the Chiappini movement in Italy.

The so-called solution of capitalism is more economic phenomena of reestablishment of capitalism, economic crisis.

Relative stabilization is only a general decline of capitalism. Capitalism does not mean, however, absolute decline at an equal rate in every country. Decline to the same extent is everywhere. 

Capitalism proceeds unevenly in its progress through the world reestablishment of capitalism, through the destruction of mankind.

The end of stabilization is the outbreak of the world revolution,
Communist International and its sections. It is an organized tactical tendency of Communism.

V

The International Communist Opposition fights against the ultra-left course of the Communist International and its sections which represents a break with the tactical principles of Leninism, which contradicts the necessity of the class struggle practically in its present stage, which makes the Communist Parties incapable of stimulating mass actions of the workingclass, of leading them and of winning the majority of the workingclass for the revolution and which finally destroys the Communist Parties themselves by paralyzing the independence of its membership and by replacing democratic centralism by the absolute power of the Party bureaucracy. The Communist Opposition likewise fights all attempts to carry through an unprincipled, partial and bureaucratic elimination of the ultra-left course which necessarily must lead to opportunist deviations (conciliation).

Situation of World Capitalism

The International Communist Opposition bases its tactical views and demands upon the following estimation of the situation of world capitalism:

- The chief stages in the development of capitalism since the World War are the following:
  1. The post-war crisis, which was accompanied by the first outbreak of the world revolution. The post-war crisis expressed itself in the absolute diminution of production, in the decline in world trade, in the disruption of international credit and in the collapse of fixed values and standards in a number of countries. The first open outbreak of the world revolution led to the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union. In Central Europe the developing proletarian revolutions were beaten back with the aid of Social Democracy. In a number of countries the bourgeoisie countered-revolution, however, put an end more or less to the still unsolved tasks of the bourgeois revolution (Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland). The first open outbreak of the world revolution was closed with the overcoming of the post-war crisis and the reestablishment of the political domination of the bourgeoisie in all countries outside the Soviet Union.
  2. The so-called stabilization of capitalism. It rests upon the overcoming of the post-war crisis and the reestablishment of the political domination of the bourgeoisie, hindering shattered. The so-called stabilization of capitalism is, therefore, no mere economic phenomenon. It signifies the reestablishment of capitalism, economically and politically. Relative stabilization is only a phase in the period of the general decline of capitalism. The general decline of capitalism does not mean, however, that capitalism is in decline at an equal rate in every country or has already declined to the same extent in every stage. The decline of capitalism proceeds unevenly in the individual countries, just as did its rise. Thus, e.g., the collapse of capitalism in Europe has, as a consequence, the ascendency of capitalism in America. Humanity is faced with this question: either progress through the world revolution or collapse into barbarism through the destruction of all the achievements of mankind.

The end of stabilization is characterized thru a new outbreak of the world revolution, i.e., thru the workingclass and its allies passing to immediate attack against the domain of capital.

The next outbreak of the world revolution is inevitably approaching revolutionaries in India and it shows that the world revolution is already in progress in the East. The objective prerequisites for the resumption of the struggle for power, i.e., for a new acute revolutionary situation, can be created through economic crisis or war. For the bourgeoisie there is no situation in itself without a way out. If the workingclass fails, then the bourgeoisie will find a way out of the crisis at the expense of the toilers, under certain conditions through the triumph of extreme counter-revolution. It is incorrect to speak of a special third period of post-war capitalism based upon a schematic transference of the chief stages of socialist construction in the Soviet Union. In the economic development of the Soviet Union, the following three chief stages can be distinguished:

- 1. The period of war communism.
- 2. The restoration period in which it was a question of putting the old establishments into motion again and reaching the level of pre-war production.
- 3. The reconstruction period in which production is extended on the basis of new establishments.

The transference of these periods to the development of the capitalist countries is false:

- 1. because it is, in general, false to establish capitalist economics on the analogy of Socialist construction;
- 2. because in most of the capitalist countries no such destruction of the capitalist productive apparatus took place as in the Soviet Union during Civil War;
- 3. because, in the capitalist countries, the pre-war levels of production had already been reached on the basis of the new productivity.

The idea that a special period of the stabilization of stability must be assumed is erroneous:

- 1. because the impression is thereby created that capitalist stabilization itself has no contradictions or shocks.
- 2. because it serves as the basis for the thesis of the immediately imminent revolutionary upheave, of the immediately imminent revolution, which has been continually announced by the Communist International. In reality it depends upon the workingclass and on the correct policies of the Communist Parties whether objective revolutionary possibilities can lead to the revolutionary upsurge and the struggle for power. If the workingclass makes no use of these revolutionary possibilities, then, the shaking of the stabilization passes and thereby also the third period, which according to the Comintern, was supposed to be the stage immediately before the revolution. The practical harm of the fiction of the third period consists in the effect it has in deluding the Communist Parties from their tasks of carrying through the organizational and political preparation for the struggle for power. The consequence of this is either put-uponism or empty talk and high-sounding prophecies, but through careful and systematic utilization of the daily struggle to awaken in the workingclass an insight and understanding of the struggle for power and the organization of this struggle.
Tactical Principles

From this estimation of the situation of world capitalism as well as from the viewpoint of communist principles those are the tactical fundamentals of the Communist Opposition:

1. The readoption of the tactics of the united front. The tactics of the united front rest upon the rallying of the workers, without regard to political or other views, or partial struggle for daily aims and demands.

2. The tactics of the united front have for their aim neither a lasting alliance with Social-Democracy nor the organizational fusion of the Communist parties with Social-Democracy but rather the winning of the majority of the working class for Communism. The tactics of the united front have for their aim the mobilization and the concentration of the forces for struggle against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state. The utilization of the united front tactics therefore signifies no approach (getting nearer) to Social-Democracy and reformism in general, but rather a political enlightenment of the masses as to the anti-labor character of the policy of collaboration with the bourgeois state (especially the coalition policy) which is carried on by Social Democracy. Wherever Communist labor organizations exist side by side with labor organizations basing themselves on other principles (reformist, anarchist, Christian), the tactics of the united front constitute an indispensable means for the winning of the majority of the working class for the fundamentals and aims of Communism, i.e., for the struggle for Soviet power.

3. The tactics of the united front require for their execution the setting up of such daily slogans or partial demands which correspond to the existing conditions and to the existing stage of understanding of the masses of the toilers as a whole. With such daily demands which are definite and serve immediate aims for action, it is to be tied up propaganda for demands which concretely prepare the minds of the workers for the transition to the struggle for power (revolutionary slogans) as well as the propaganda of Communist fundamentals.

4. The activity of Communists in Parliament and municipal councils must, side by side with basic revolutionary propaganda, aim at the Organization of the united front of workers in extra-parliamentary activity. Parliamentary activity must be subordinated to extra-parliamentary activity and must be adapted to the conditions of extra-parliamentary struggle.

The National Question

On the national question the Communist Opposition stands on the basis of the thesis of the Second World Congress of the Communist International and therefore fights:

1. Against all concessions to bourgeois chauvinism and nationalism, i.e., against all attempts to subordinate social questions to national questions and to liquidate or even to weaken the class antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie in the interests of so-called national unity.

2. Against national nihilism, i.e., lack of attention to the concrete question of the struggle against national oppression in the concrete confrontations.

Trade Union Work

Revolutionary work in the trade unions, with the aim of creating united trade unions participating in the general class struggle of the working class for the overthrow of capitalism, and after the seizure of power for taking part in the construction of socialism, is the most important tactical demand of the International Communist Opposition. For this it is necessary to eliminate the reformist influence in the trade unions and to make Communist influence dominant (winning the trade unions).

Here several distinctions must be made:

1. Countries in which the trade union movement is still united (Germany, Sweden, Finland, England, etc.), here the Communist Opposition is against the formation of the new "revolutionary" trade unions, it is for tactics that will make it as difficult as possible for the reformists to realize their splitting tactics.

2. Countries in which "red Unions" exist. Here also the general course must be for the reestablishment of trade union unity. But this reunification must not be forced for as a capitulation of the red unions before the reformist unions but rather along the road of strengthening the red unions.

3. Countries in which mass trade unions are only just beginning to be established (India, etc.), in which the trade unions coexist with the organization of definite groups of workers (especially the unskilled workers, as in the USA).

In the last named countries the Communist Opposition pursues the following tactical viewpoint in its revolutionary trade union work:

1. It must use as a basis for the formation of the trade unions all existing trade unions which have a mass character.

2. New trade unions should be organized in those industries where no trade unions exist as yet or where the existing trade unions have no mass basis at all.

3. The general question of organizing the unorganized must be connected with the question of forming a left-wing in the existing trade unions. All efforts must be made to utilize the resources of the old unions for the organization of the unorganized into new unions or for winning them into the old unions.

"Fighting leaderships" established in opposition to the majority of organized workers involved are to be rejected. Communists must be prepared to engage in a struggle of economic struggles thus winning decisive influence among the organized workers of the factories involved.

If a strike takes place where the workers involved are not organized, then the strike committee must see to it that the strikers are organized into the trade union movement.

Struggles Against Fascism

The struggle against fascism can only be effectively conducted in the name of the non-communist workers and the reformist workers for this struggle. This is impossible as long as the Social Democratic workers are assered fascist desires (the theory of socialist fascism). The "theory of socialist fascism," because it rests on a false estimation of class forces, prevents an effective fight against real fascism. Communists must be leaders in the defense of all rights, organizations, and institutions of the working class against fascism which wants to destroy them.

International Actions

The International Communist Opposition calls attention to the necessity of the organization of international political campaigns to unite the international movements of the working class and to serve the struggles of the workers against the international politics of the bourgeoisie. On this field the following questions are noteworthy:

1. The struggle against the Young Plan.

2. Against the international anti-Soviet campaign and for the defense of the Soviet Union.

3. Against the international fascist danger.

4. Against unemployment.

5. Against imperialist armaments and war preparations.

6. Against imperialist oppression.

For the support of the freedom.  

The Inner-Party

The Communist Opposition figures in the Communist International against the replacement of bureaucratic centralism.

The Communist Opposition of the International:

1. The extension of the right (or in fact) of criticism, which leaders of the Comintern.

2. The preparation of important Comintern through international.

3. The abandonment of the conception of the Party representatives who are in own judgment on the class basis and who are not merely of the leadership but actually trusted re-sections.

5. The legal sections of the Communist International being a means for regular party work.

6. The International leadership (a) the leading of international opposition and (c) the carrying through of the fund as the general tactical line by the International leadership cannot be sections.

The Party

In the sections of the Communist Opposition demands times, the election membership.

2. The election of Party Congress delegates to the international congress after a fore-going discussion.

3. The right of discussion of all bounds of the Communist fund actions.

4. The removal of all corrupt apparatus.

Against Trotskyism

The International Communist Opposition because of its fundamental Communist standpoint and position. The basic deviation of the
Communist influence dominant
must be made:

the trade union movement is still
Finland, England, etc.). Here the
against the formation of the new
large mass of people that will make
for the reformists to realize their
Red Unions” exist. Here also the
for the reestablishment of trade
fication must not be fought for as
before the reformist unions of
strengthening the red unions.

mass trade unions are only just
(India, etc.), or in which the
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refuses the Communist Opposition
viewpoint in its revolutionary
for the formation of the trade
unions which have a mass
should be organized in those
unions exist as yet or where the
mass basis at all.

6. Against imperialist oppression in the colonial
countries. For the support of the colonial struggles for
freedom.

The Inner-Party Regime

The Communist Opposition fights the present inner-party
regime in the Communist International and its sections.
It fights against the replacement of democratic centralism
by bureaucratic centralism.

The Communist Opposition demands of the Communist
International:
1. The extension of the right (existing in the statutes but
not in fact) of criticism, which today exists only for the
leaders of the Comintern.
2. The preparation of important decisions of the
Comintern through international discussions.
3. The abandonment of the mechanical transference of
the points of view and inner-party differences in the
CPSU to the other sections and of the considerations of the questions
of the individual sections primarily from the point of view
of the differences in the CPSU.

The questions of the individual sections must be
examined, estimated and decided from the viewpoint of the special
conditions of the class struggle in the individual
countries.

4. The replacement of the actual monopoly of the CPSU
in the leadership of the Comintern by a real collective and at
the same time, united and centralized leadership based upon
Party representatives who are in the position to pass their
own judgment on the class relations in their own countries
and who are not merely officials of the international
leadership but actually trusted representatives of their
own sections.

5. The legal sections of the Comintern must raise their
own means for regular party work. International financial
support shall be given (a) to illegal parties; (b) to legal parties
for special campaigns and for production and distribution
of international propaganda literature.

6. The International leadership shall have as its tasks:
(a) the leading of international actions; (b) the working
out of general tactical lines; (c) the supervision and control
of the carrying through of the fundamental principles as well
as the general tactical line by the individual sections. The
International leadership cannot replace the leaderships
of the sections. The International leadership should lead but
not hold in apron-strings.

7. The withdrawal of all expulsions against opponents
of the ultra-left course.

The Parties

In the sections of the Comintern the International
Communist Opposition demands:
1. In legal times, the election of functionaries by the
membership.
2. The election of Party Congress delegates and the
delegates to the international congresses by the membership
after a fore-going discussion.
3. The right of appeal of all party questions within the
bounds of the Communist fundamentals and discipline
of action.
4. The removal of all corrupt elements from the Party
apparatus.

Against Trotskyism

The International Communist Opposition fights
Trotskyism because of its fundamental deviations from the
Communist standpoint and because of its false tactical
position. The basic deviation of Trotskyism manifests itself
in the complete or partial denial of the character of the
Soviet Union as a proletarian state in which socialism is
being built.

In respect to tactics Trotskyism shares the ultra-left
viewpoint on a whole series of questions.

Two Alternatives

Before the Communist International and its sections
stands the alternative: either, with the unreserved
continuation of the ultra-left course, complete destruction
as a mass organization outside the Soviet Union, or through
the basic correction of this line, the reestablishment of the
unity of the Communist Party and the continuation, on the
basis of the tactical teachings of Lenin, of the now
interrupted progress toward the victory of world revolution.

The Colonial Question

On the colonial question the Communist Opposition
stands on the basis of the Second Congress of the
Communist International. Therefore it fights the ultra-left
deviations in the Comintern on this question.

Document No. 2

The Communist Opposition
and the Communist International

Resolution of the International Conference of the

The organization affiliated to the International Union of
the Communist Opposition comprises an internationally
organized tactical tendency of Communism, which arose in
the struggle against the ultra-left course of the Comintern
and its sections. The basic aim of the ICO is to overcome
the ultra-left course in the Comintern and its sections,
in the political, organizational and inner-party fields, and to
replace it with really Leninist tactics, i.e., by the correct
application of the fundamentals and aims of Communism in
the international class struggle of the proletariat and of
other oppressed and exploited classes.

An extremely effective means for the achievement of this
end is for the International Communist Opposition to win a
broad mass influence. By winning the support of masses of
workers not belonging to the Communist Party, we are
creating a broader basis for winning the non-Communist
masses for our aims, for Comunism.

Reflecting the conditions under which they work, the
organizations of the ICO can be divided into three main
types: (a) where the organization of the ICO is the
Communist Party as in Sweden; here our task is to extend
our role as the Party of Communism to liquidate the existing
split organizations of the Comintern and finally to bring it
about that in the respective country only one Communist
Party should exist. (b) In countries, such as Germany and
the United States, where the organization of the ICO is only
a group; here our task is to win the Communist Party, but
also to take over the role of the Communist Party in every
case and in every question possible. (c) In countries such as

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India, where the official section of the Comintern exists only on paper; here our task is to build up a real Communist Party on the basis of the tactical fundamentals of the ICO.

The Communist Opposition clearly understands that in any single country there can be no Communist Party that exist. The official bodies of the Comintern are splitting the Communist movement. The Communist Opposition desires to reestablish unity in the Communist International and to strengthen it.

The organizations affiliated with the ICO stand on the basis of the principles developed by Marx and Lenin, that is, on the basis of the section on fundamentals of the Program of the Communist International, as well as on the basis of the tactical and organizational decisions of the first three Congresses of the Communist International.

2. The decisive aims of the struggle of the ICO are:

I. On the Political Field

(a) The rapprochement of the tactics of the united front, which have been abandoned in fact by the present ultra-left course. The sphere of the tactics of the united front is the leadership of the daily struggles of the working class and the bringing of the whole class to the struggle for power.

(b) The tactics of the united front demand the combination of an appeal to the members of the lower organizations with an appeal to the district and central leaderships of the reformist, centrist and, in various circumstances, Christian labor organizations. The application of the tactics of the united front requires the setting up of such partial demands and revolutionary transition slogans, corresponding to the necessities and the understanding of the working class at the particular moment. It requires the spread of these slogans, worked out with the greatest care, among the masses of the proletariat and the toiling people. The agitation and propaganda of slogans of action must always be connected with propaganda of the fundamentals and aims of Communism.

II. On the Organizational Field

The establishment of permanent alliances and of inner-party democracy in the Comintern and in the sections.

This includes:

(a) The conducting of discussions on disputed tactical questions with the participation of the entire membership.

(b) The election of functionaries, under legal conditions, by the membership and a constant and effective control (supervision) over their activities by the membership.

(c) The construction of the Comintern and its sections on the basis of collaborative work of the representatives of all sections in the Executive of the Comintern and in its sections.

Already in March 1930 the German Communist Opposition (and other organizations of the ICO) addressed an Open Letter to the Comintern in which it declared: "The Comintern finds itself in a crisis threatening its existence, making it incapable of fulfilling its historic tasks."

And further: "The danger is threatening that the Communist Party will be completely destroyed as political mass forces in their countries, that nothing will remain of them except sects, Party apparatus stripped of the working class. Subsequent developments have not only confirmed the correctness of this estimation but have even sharpened to an extraordinary extent in order to overcome these dangers, conditions for a victorious struggle, the Communist Party of that time, placed the following demands:

The immediate withdrawal of discipline measures against the members of the course. An immediate international of democratic centralism for the political work of the Comintern.

The new election of Party functionaries, including the Executive Committee, on the basis of this discussion.

The carrying out of the fundamental decisions of the Comintern are bound, under the necessary means for their realization, by contributions of their members.

Subsequent developments have sharpened the insufficiency of these demands.

The ICO rejects the attempt to introduce a principle of "socialism in one country" (concealing the possibility of building up socialism before the victory of the proletarian countries) as the source of the Comintern.

It rejects, likewise, the principle of the necessity of all the Soviet Union and of the Comintern, on the contrary, it is of the opinion that the first country in which the working-class socialism is being built, could not be the source of the Comintern, of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern on the contrary, it is of the opinion that the first country in which the working-class socialism is being built, could not be the source of the Comintern, of the Soviet Union.

Although the interests of the Soviet Union and of the Comintern are bound, under the necessary means for their realization, by contributions of their members, the ICO has already accomplished the fundamental and aims of Communist and organizational fundamentals of concrete relations of the class within the world.
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to overcome these dangers and to provide
the conditions for a victorious struggle of the
nary class, the Communist Party of Germany
 Opposition) at that
time, placed the following demands:

The immediate withdrawal of all expulsions
and disciplinary measures against the opponents of the
ultra-left course. An immediate international
discussion on the basis of
democratic centralism for the purpose of
ig the political course of the
nist International.

The new election of Party leadership and Party
functionaries, including the Executive of the Comintern,
on the basis of this discussion.

The carrying out of the fundamental idea that the
sections of the Comintern are bound, under legal
aids, to raise the necessary means for their regular
out the contributions of their members.

Subsequent developments have only emphasised
the indispensibility of these demands.

3. The ICO rejects the attempt to look upon the theory of
"socialism in one country" (concretely, the affirmation
of the possibility of building up socialism in the Soviet
Union before the victory of the proletarian revolution in other
countries) as the source of the ultra-left course of
the Comintern. It rejects, likewise, the attempt to find this
source in a necessary contradiction between the interests of
the Soviet Union and those of the international proletariat,
no contrary, it is of the opinion that the interests of the
first country in which the workingclass rules and in which
socialism is being built, coincide fundamentally and are
in complete harmony with the interests of the struggle for
the emancipation of the workingclass and the other sections of
the toiling people in the rest of the world. It is the duty of
very Communist to fight against all attacks of
nter-revolution the Soviet Union to base its work upon
a socialist foundation as the bulwark of the
 proletarian revolution.

Although the interests of the Soviet Union and those of
the world revolution coincide fundamentally, it is
ecessary quite possible that methods and forms of
struggle in countries in which the workingclass has not
achieved power should not coincide with those in which this
has already been accomplished. The application of the
fundamentals and aims of Communism as well as of tactical
and organizational fundamentals must be adapted to the
concrete relations of the class struggle in the various
countries.

The real basic source of the ultra-left course is seen by
the ICO to be the false transference of the methods and forms
of struggle corresponding to a country in which socialism is
being built to the Communist Parties of those countries
in which the majority of the workingclass has still to be won
and the prerequisites for taking up the struggle for power
still have to be provided. This false transference is
accompanied by the destruction of the possibility of
properly evaluating and taking into account the experiences
of the Communist Parties outside of the Soviet Union. A
further cause is the mechanical transference of the
struggles within the CPSU to the Comintern and its
sections.

The basis of all this is the monopoly of leadership of
the CPSU in the Comintern. Until Lenin's death this was still
a positive factor; it has now, however, lost its usefulness
because the gap between the tasks of the CPSU (the tasks of
social construction) and the tasks of the other sections of
the Comintern (the tasks of the preparation and the carrying
through of the struggle for power), have been continually
growing, especially in recent years in view of the much
greater tempo of socialist construction in the USSR, as

compared with the advance of the revolution in the
capitalist countries. For these reasons the monopoly of leadership
must be abolished and there must be created a collective
leadership for the Comintern International which will
direct the forces of the revolution of the whole world (the
victorious workers of the Soviet Union and the still
oppressed workers of the rest of the world) according to
uniform fundamentals but with consideration for the special
conditions of their various nationalities. The
ICO therefore sees in the ultra-left tactics of the
Communist, not the inevitable and permanent effect of an
alleged contradiction between the interests of the Soviet
Union and of the proletarian revolution in other countries,
but rather the effect of a temporary, but serious, fault of the
part of the leadership of the CPSU to understand the
tactcal necessities of the Communist movement outside of
the Soviet Union.

4. The ICO and its sections did not separate voluntarily
from the Comintern and its sections but were expelled in
violation of democratic centralism and inner-party democracy
because they refused to surrender their
Communist right of criticizing the ultra-left course. The
ICO fights for the rehabilitation of the Comintern and of its
sections. The basic condition for this is the reestablishment
of inner-party democracy and of democratic centralism in
the individual sections of the Comintern and the Comintern
as a whole.

The ICO recognizes that the reestablishment of inner-
party democracy and of democratic centralism (as they are
given in the demands of the March 1930 Open Letter of the
Communist Party of Germany (Opposition)) is only a part
of the reestablishment of the ultra-left course. The ICO
regards the reestablishment of normal Party life as sufficient
allow it to work, within the Communist Party, and in the
interests of the Communist movement and the open
liquidation of the ultra-left course which would make this
liquidation possible at minimum cost and damage to the
Party and would stimulate the quickest and most extensive
reestablishment of the Party, today so badly damaged by the
ultra-left course and the leadership responsible for it.

The rehabilitation of the Communist International
depends, from a positive viewpoint, that the leadership of
the Comintern develop its activities within the
following limits:

(a) To assure the maintenance of Communist
fundamentals in the Comintern and in all its sections.
(b) To organize international actions and campaigns.
(c) To coordinate the activities of the various sections.

In the working out of specific questions in the
individual countries the important and most decisive role must fall to
the parties of those countries themselves. However, the
highest and final decision in those questions belongs to the
leadership of the Communist International. It must take
care that, in the settlement of those questions, the
fundamentals and the tactical principles are
maintained. But, on the other hand, the leadership of the
Comintern must not replace the leadership of the individual
sections.

5. The ICO and its affiliated organizations reject the
manoeuvres of the leading bodies of the Comintern and its
sections, having as their object to play off individual
national organizations of the ICO, local groups, and single
members against each other by calling upon them to reject the
Party. With such manoeuvres the Party leaders show that
they cannot themselves take seriously their accusations
against the Communist Opposition and recognize that the
latter has not left the basis of Communist principles.

On the other hand, however, the ICO greets the
increasingly frequent honest desires of the members of

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Comintern for the readmission of the Opposition; it emphasizes the necessity for the members who honestly desire this to take a stand for it in the Comintern and the Communist parties. The Communist Opposition, which has carried on a four-year struggle for the liquidation of the ultra-left course, is conscious of the fact that it has rendered the Communist movement an indispensable service. It declares that its criticism and action, carried out in bitter struggle under the greatest difficulties, have already had and are now having deep-going and wholesome effects in the Communist Parties and the Comintern, as well as in the labor movement generally. It declares that its estimation of the effects of the ultra-left course has been fully verified by the facts and, in a number of cases, has even been recognized by the leading committees, even if these latter have been either unwilling or unable to recognize the ultra-left course as the cause of the trouble and to remove this cause. On the basis of these facts the Communist Opposition is confident that it will finally overcome all difficulties and emerge victorious. But this victory can only be achieved thru the active intervention of the Party members who will draw the necessary lessons from the negative experiences. It is for this cooperation that the Communist Opposition appeals above all.

6. The Communist Opposition declares to the leadership of the Comintern that, in the face of the extremely acute danger of a Fascist seizure of power in Germany as well as of a war of intervention against the Soviet Union, no time must be lost in giving up completely and openly the ultra-left course, thereby creating the decisive and indispensable prerequisites for the Comintern and the Communist parties' winning leadership of the working class for the defeat of fascism, for the achievement of a revolutionary way out of the crisis, and for the defense of the Soviet Union and thereby also bringing about a revival of the declining labor movement outside of the Soviet Union, a consequence of the ultra-left course.

In order to achieve the aim of the Comintern, the consolidation of the working class of the whole world for the overthrow of the bourgeois State, for the destruction of the capitalist system, and for the construction of a socialist society, the organization of the ICO has always been and is now ready to stretch out a hand to reestablish the unity of the Communist Movement under the above mentioned indispensable conditions, which alone assure the elaboration of correct Communist tactics on the basis of the collective experience and the collaboration of all sections of the Comintern and which alone prevent the repetition of tactical mistakes through the participation of the membership.

Document No. 3
The Viewpoint of the International Communist Opposition

With Germany staring us in the face it would be an insult to the intelligence of the readers of this journal to pile up evidence to prove that there is a crisis in world Communism today. Nothing is more obvious to those who have eyes to see and courage to think. But to recognize the lamentable state of affairs in the international Communist movement is not enough; it is above all necessary to probe the roots of the crisis, to examine its forms and to outline a program for the rehabilitation of the only movement that offers mankind a way out today. These problems have been faced by the International Communist Opposition and attacked, in the last four years, with a measurable degree of success. In the following paragraphs, I propose to describe very briefly the main conceptions that have been hammered out in these years of theoretical and practical work of the Communist Opposition.

From an immediate standpoint, it is almost self-evident that the present political impotence and demoralization of the official Communist parties, outside of the Soviet Union, are directly traceable to the incredibly sectarian tactics with which these organizations have been operating since the onset of the crisis in 1928. Sectarianism is a fatal blight in the revolutionary movement; by playing with slogans and tactics too "advanced" for the situation, it sacrifices realistic revolutionary achievement to high-sounding radical phrase-mongering and systematically breaks the ties binding the Communist vanguard with the masses of the proletariat, bringing the degeneration of dry-rot to the former and surrendering the latter to political confusion and the influence of reaction. And, as we shall see, sectarianism has its logic for the party organization as well.

In what does this fatal sectarianism consist? I think the best way of approaching this question is by placing in sharp contrast the tactical standpoint of the Communist Opposition and that of the official Communist Party, in this way outlining both the positive and negative aspects of the situation.

The Communist Opposition emphasizes as fundamental the fact that "the development of the revolution in different countries proceeds along varying paths with varying rapidities" (Lenin). It therefore rejects the conception of "mechanical conformity to the center," the "bourgeois line of the Comintern," which, taken as such, is foreign to the Communist Party of France, to the "mechanical adjustment and equalization of the tactical lines of struggle." The Communist Opposition sees the stand upon the idea that "the main problem . . . is the specific national features must be studied, and the line which should be adhered to before concrete attempts are made in any country to solve the aspects of a single international problem . . . to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to institute a Soviet republic and proletarian dictatorship." It is the reckless disregard of this apparently elementary Marxist idea that has led to the obvious sterile of official Communist activity and to the unmistakable air of unreality and "foreignness" that much of what the Communist parties say and do.

2. The Communist Opposition emphasizes as fundamental that "Marxism requires the most accurate and objectively confirmed analysis of the mutual relations of classes and of the concrete peculiarities of every historical movement." (Lenin). We insist upon a realistic estimate of objective conditions and the relation of forces in the labor movement. We reject the concept of a "revolutionary" phrase-mongering characteristic of the "analyses" of the official leadership of the American Communist Party and of the Comintern.

3. The Communist Opposition emphasizes as fundamental that, for the break of the revolutionary class action of the proletariat. We point out that there is no crisis which cannot be overcome, temporarily and masses, if the working class is not to lose the advantage of the critical state of affairs; of capital. We therefore reject the "bourgeois line of the Comintern," the idea of the "inevitable" collapse of capitalism (automatic) result of the aggravation of the economic crisis.

4. The Communist Opposition is fundamental that "it is particularly the purpose of winning over the major ... to work ... unions and skillfully ... to win them .... to change and replace trade union leaders... of the preparatory period" (Proletarian International). We insist that all trade unions must be directed to the trade union into a real support of the proletariat" (Third Comintern Congress) and "reject all policies and tendencies in or desiring the conservative masses and the interests of the proletariat... of the fulfillment of the Communist in the sharpest possible course dominating the Communist which, in spite of all twists and ... the mass unions, directly on... to its utterly sectarian position be mainly attributed the deviant influence among the organized workers of the Unions and the crecudes of dualism has been... The Communist Opposition stresses trade union movement; one union... that the Union Federation of Labor. We propose to the conservative mass unions to form... for the organization of the unions... of the Trade... the trade Unions... “center” should be done away with and the... are genuine mass working class... bound up with the everyday life of the workers... The Communist Opposition portrays... of the unions... the unions... since such a conclusion leaving the field clear for bourgeois... must work in the trade union...
there is a crisis in world Communism. It is obvious to those who have eyes to see that the recognition of the lamentable fact that national Communist movement is a necessary evil in order to prove the roots of the idea and to outline a program for the movement that offers mankind a solution to the problems that have been faced by the Communist Opposition and attacked, in the unspeakable degree of success. In the present situation, it is necessary for the Communist Opposition to rework in general, the situation, in other words, the fact that the situation is a fatal blight in the fact. By playing with slogans and theories, the situation, it serves realistic aim to high-sounding radical phraseology—locally breaks the ties binding the masses of the proletariat, of dry-rot to the former and to political confusion and the like, we shall see, securianism has an as well.

securianism consist? I think the key question is by placing in sharp opposition of the Communist and the official Communist Party, in this positive and negative aspects of the securianism.

Opposition emphasis on the development of the idea along varying lines (Lenin). It therefore rejects national uniformity, dominating the world today, according to which not of the class struggle in each country (or countries are sometimes even denied) and its countries, is taken as the point of a tactic. Such a method leads, as the mechanical adjustment and defeatist line of struggle. The article seems upon the idea that the specific national features must be thought and grasped before concrete country to solve the aspects of a problem... to overthrow the state (as a Soviet republic and the like) to reject this Marxist idea that has led to securianism as the official Communist Party, and the idea of “nationality” that much parties say and deny.

Opposition emphasis as fundamental that, for the breakdown of capitalism, the revolutionary class action of the proletariat is indispensable. We point out that there is no crisis which the bourgeoisie cannot overcome, temporarily and at the expense of the masses, if the working class is not ready and not able to take advantage of the critical state of affairs to overthrow the rule of capital. We therefore reject the conception dominating the Communist International today, in one form or another, of the "inevitable" collapse of capitalism as the mechanical (automatic) result of the aggravation of the world-wide economic crisis.

4. The Communist Opposition emphasises as fundamental that “it is particularly important for the purpose of winning over the majority of the proletariat to win the trade unions... To work in the reactionary trade unions and skillfully to turn them, to win the confidence of the workers, to change and remove from their posts the reformist trade union leaders—are these the important tasks of the preparatory period?” (Program of the Communist International). We insist that all Communist work in the trade unions must be directed to the goals of “convincing” the trade unions into a real support of the revolutionary proletariat (Third Comintern Congress). We therefore reject all policies and tendencies in the direction of splitting or deserting the conservative mass unions, as a means to the interests of the proletariat and as a serious obstacle in the way of the fulfillment of the Communist objective. We condemn in the sharpest possible manner the sectarian course dominating the Communist International today which, in spite of all twists and turns, still aims to split and desert the mass unions, directly or indirectly.

To its utterly sectarian position on the trade unions must be mainly attributed the devastating loss of Communist influence among the organized workers the world over. In the United States, the “classic land of dual unionism,” the rebirth of dualism has been well-nigh suicidal.

The Communist Opposition stands for the unity of the trade union movement, one union in every industry, one trade union federation in every country, one world trade union federation! We are categorically opposed to the dual unionism that is at the foundation of official Communist tactics today. We are opposed to the splitting of the conservative mass unions to form “Red” unions. We stand for the organization of the unorganized and for the affiliation of the newly formed unions to the American Federation of Labor. We propose that the existing “Red” unions (as well as the Trade Union Unity League, their “center”) should be done away with as dual organizations; as a matter of fact, they enjoy merely a paper existence today; they are official factions. Whatever membership these “Red” unions have, should be urged to join the mass unions and to strengthen the revolutionary wing in these conservative bodies.

The Communist Opposition rejects the conception, in which the sectarian tactics of the official Communist Party are rooted, that the conservative unions are not workers organizations but rather “capitalist” organizations, in fact, adjuncts of the bourgeois state! We emphasise that the trade unions, no matter how conservative they may be, are "genuine mass working class organizations, closely bound up with the everyday life of the workers" (Comintern Program).

The Communist Opposition points out that genuine trade union cannot be party adjuncts but organizations in which the masses of workers, even the most backward, are to be found. Of course, we reject the conception of "no politics in the unions," since such a conception obviously means leaving the field clear to bourgeois policies. Communists must work in the trade union field with the objective of winning the members, on the basis of propaganda and the lessons of experience, to the political viewpoint of Communism. But this is not equivalent to, it directly excludes, every attempt to make the trade unions organizationally and formally subordinated to the Communist Party. The autonomy of the trade unions is entirely safeguarded if they are to function as real mass organizations.

5. The Communist Opposition emphasises as fundamental the tactics of the united front, by which is understood a block or alliance of labor organizations of various political tendencies on the basis of a common minimum program, each participating organization retaining its full right of political expression and activity. We condemn very severely the diplomatic maneuvers under cover of which the official Communist movement has, in fact, completely repudiated this indispensable method of uniting labor’s ranks and winning the masses for revolutionary struggle by such sectarian phrases as the “united front from below,” the “united front around the party,” and so on. The total isolation of the official Communist movement from other tendencies in the labor movement must certainly be traced mainly to the rejection of the tactics of the united front.

6. The Communist Opposition emphasises as fundamental the establishment of proper relations between the Communist and the Socialist workers. In spite of its essentially bourgeois policies, the Socialist Party is a workers party and is thereby a section of the labor movement; to challenge this means to insist that the American labor movement is really synonymous with the Communist Party and its adjuncts—something that even the most brazen ultra-sectarian theorectician of the official Communist Party has never been able to convince the whole of the revolutionary party. The victory of the revolution over the reformist idea can be achieved only by convincing the Socialist workers of the fact that their socialist aspirations can be realized only thru the Communist Party and not by charging that the Socialist Party is “no more” than a capitalist party, just like the Republican and Democratic organizations, or even worse than these. We categorically reject the theory of “social fascism,” because it represents a false analysis of the character of Social Democracy, because it gives rise to a totally false orientation of struggle, because it places great obstacles in the way of winning the Socialist workers to Communism.

These great points of difference all relate to fundamental problems of strategy and tactics and not to the principles of Communism. But this in no way reduces their vital significance for, without effective strategy and tactics, principles are no more than sterile dogmas, at bottom obstacles in the way of the development of a revolutionary movement of labor, “Mistakes in tactics,” Engels warned us, “may often be certain conditions end in a break with principles.”

As I mentioned before, securianism has its own logic for the party organization as well as for policy and tactics. Securianism breeds bureaucracy and cliquism within the party itself. It also, often, introverted orientation of securianism, running counter to all the objective demands of the class struggle and to the inner necessities of the revolutionary movement, can fortify itself only by building up an abnormal regime upon which it can rest. In order to overcome the threat of a protest against the ever more obviously false policies of the official leaders, in order to prevent differences of opinion from arising within the organization and challenging the system, in order to mislead the new membership into ready acceptance of the new gospel, a most repressive regime has grown up in all
official Communist parties throughout the world.

Democratic centralism, upon which all Communist organizations should rest, implies the right of free expression of opinion within the party and free discussion of all vital issues, by side with the disciplined execution of decisions rigidly arrived at. But the whole system of democratic centralism has today given way to the most odious form of bureaucracy, which crushes every right of membership, every right of free discussion, every possibility of criticism of policy, every opportunity of correction of mistakes. The inevitable consequences are the stagnation of the normal course of political development and the fostering of a sterile, and parrot-like repetition of general and ill-understood phrases that constitute a serious menace to the life of the Communist movement.

The excesses to which the stupid bureaucracy degrading our movement has led are almost indescribable. The most irresponsible falsification, the most imbecilic slander and abuse, the most disgusting anti-proletarian hero-cults are all its fine flowers. The spiritual degradation and corruption of thousands of militant workers, especially the youth, will be a charge that the present leadership of the official Communist movement will find it difficult indeed to meet in the future!

What is the source of the positively disastrous state of affairs in the world communist movement, of the crisis sectarianism in policy and the stilling bureaucracy in regime?

The roots of the present crisis in the world Communist movement run deep indeed. They touch the very foundations upon which the Communist International is reared: its organization and system of leadership. The Communist International arose as the organizational expression of the revolutionary wing of the Socialist movement; it was born under the impact of the great Russian Revolution. Within it, from the very beginning, were to be found Communist Parties of two distinct types. On the one hand, the old Communist Parties in Soviet Russia, which had already accomplished the revolution, was in control of state power, and was faced with the problems of socialist construction; on the other, the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries, faced with the quite different task of establishing themselves as the vanguard of their class, of winning and organizing the workers for revolution. From the beginning, also, the CPSU completely overshadowed all other parties in the Comintern for obvious and natural reasons: it must be stated, however, that, at the outset, this influence was rather of revolutionary authority than of power. In the early years of the Communist International, say from 1919 to 1923, this whole situation was not very serious, because, first of all, the primary task then was the assimilation of the great international lessons of the Russian Revolution by the non-Russian parties, and secondly, because the relatively revolutionary situation in Western Europe rendered the conditions there largely comparable to the conditions in Soviet Russia engaged in direct military struggle with world capitalism. Nor must we overlook the decisive fact that, under Lenin, the preponderant influence of the CPSU in the Comintern was exercised with great care and discretion.

But it was not long before the situation underwent a fundamental change in all respects. Economic problems and socialist reconstruction became the all-absorbing in the Soviet Union, and properly so. On the other hand, the course of the revolution in Western Europe began to slow down and the main political and tactical problems of the preparatory period emerged as dominant. The gap which thus developed systematically between conditions in the Soviet Union, the land of rapidly rising socialism, and those in the capitalist world, obviously made essential, in order to bridge it, the crystallization of a really international, collective leadership for the Comintern, reflecting all aspects of the world movement. In such a leadership, the CPSU would be first among equals, but nothing more, for its own good as well as for the good of the Comintern. Instead, there has actually come into being a rigid monoply of leadership of the Communist International, lightly held by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or rather, by its leadership. The Communist International has thus become, in fact if not in form, an appendage of the leading (Stalin) faction of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

What has been the inevitable consequences of this state of affairs? First, the mechanical transference of the methods and forms of struggle, suitable to the Soviet Union, a country in which the working class has already triumphed, to those countries in which the majority of the working class is still to be won for Communism and the very prerequisites of the struggle for power are still to be created. In the Soviet Union, all trade unions are "Red" unions, directly led by the party; so must it be in the United States as well, even if it means the desertion of the mass unions and the demonizing swindle of paper TUUI "unions." In the Soviet Union, where the CPSU has quite properly monopolized of political existence and all other parties are only counter-revolutionary conspiratorial circles, there can be no talk of the united front; so must it be in the United States as well, even if it means complete isolation from the labor movement! Only the crassest sectarianism can result from such an outlook.

Secondly, there is an irresistible tendency to transfer mechanically political turns and changes of policy in the Soviet Union, where they may be quite justified, to the non-Soviet parties, where this may not be the case necessarily or even probably. For example, in 1924, Soviet policy towards the left; immediately followed the automatic swing of the Comintern line to the left, here without objective justification and therefore assuming the character of ultra-ftism, Witness the Ruth Fisher-Maslows course in Germany, which brought them to the brink of ruin: Trotsky-Szabo; Grunau of France; Neurath in Czechoslovakia; etc., etc. Then, in 1925-1926 came a turn to the right in the Soviet Union; immediately it was projected outside, fortunately this time, because conditions demanded a swing in this direction. Then, it was followed by the Five-Year Plan, a drive to the left. Again, mechanical transference and again sectarianism! We have it now that these haphazard rig-taug take place, they are largely illegitimate consequences of perfectly proper and necessary changes of policy of the CPSU.

Accompanying this type of mechanical transference, in the third place, is another type of even greater impact, the mechanical transference of factional issues and factional differences from the CPSU to the non-Soviet parties. With the Comintern serving in the appendage of the leading faction of the CPSU this became well-nigh inevitable. Note that even if the leadership of the Soviet party is thoroughly correct in its position, the mere attempt to extend these factional struggles artificially to parties where such issues do not exist, does untold harm.

In the fourth place, there arises a tendency, more and more obvious with time, for the leadership of the Communist International (that is, the leading faction of the CPSU) to replace the individual Communist Parties in the actual guidance of the class struggle in the various countries, a tendency to suppress the political initiative and ideological self-consciousness of these parties. It is clear enough that such a condition is positively fatal to any organization striving to conquer the workingclass and organize Communist Party capable of leading the overthrow of capitalism cannot be (by cable instructions) or by mere political character.

It should be obvious at this point sources of the crisis in the Communist movement, of the allegedly false policies of the Stalin faction, in socialist construction and general policies of the CPSU in the US, especially since the sharp change of front with our endorsement as before, but the same, most sharply the regime dominating the Soviet party and even more so the party of the CPSU, but precisely that the best way of eliminating for all time and clear and correct ones is party democracy, Stalin regime within the Soviet party, violation of the basic ideas because it leads to ideological chaos, because it places great obstacles to adequate solution of the economic and political issues.

There is no inconsistency whatever main policies of the Stalin leader and at the same time vigorous sectarianism of the Communist Int and the Stalin leadership, I hope that it is quite possible for the same time, for the Stalin leadership and yet do untold harm mechanically transferring Soviet policies of policy and factional disputes to place where they are entirely inappropriate and change the conditions and the character of the Communist movement in the Soviet Union, in the capitalist world, and in the root of all our troubles!

The adherents of the Left Opposition, despite of the superficial intransigence of "Stalinism," share completely its fatal errors, for the Fundamental Law makes the Communist International and the leading faction in the CPSU, PCUS, and the Five-Year Plan, which makes the CPSU faction a drive to the left. Again, mechanical transference and again sectarianism! What it Trotsky would likely do the same thing as the CPSU faction but to keep the system itself; this would not only fail but actually make matters much worse.

That Trotsky has no serious political leadership prevalent in the Soviet Union is quite obvious from the fact that he was in his International Left Opposition Group, the Russian Left Opposition, and the Stalin! The non-Soviet Trotsky group in the reflected glory of the Russian Stalin program of the Trotsky group in a most nothing to do with the crisis in the trade union movement. That Trotsky was at all time great obstacles to building socialism is a reality of the inner-life of the International Left
In order to bridge the gap, the international collective leadership effecting all aspects of the world leadership, the CPSU would be first, more, for its own good as well as others. Instead, there has actually been a monopoly of leadership of the various parts, tightly held by the party leadership, or rather by its leadership. This has thus become, in fact if not in name, the leading (Stalin) faction of the Soviet Union.

The inevitable consequences of this state of affairs, which would make any subsequent change, and this is not the case, is to establish a new international party, such as the CPSU, has quite properly been and all other parties are otherwise constituted, circles, or circles, and so on. It must be in the United States as well, even if it is one of the mass unions and the paper TUUL "unions." In the CPSU has quite properly functioned along to serve the purposes of the party, and we have not been the case. Thus, in 1924, Soviet policy was not in the original sense of the word. The Comintern line to the left, immediately followed the Comintern line to the right, here in Austrian and therefore assuming the function of the party in the years 1925-1926, again a turn to the left. Immediately it was projected back, because conditions demanded it. Then, in 1925-1926, it came a turn to the right, the Five Year Plan, a drive to economic transference and again, it is then that these haphazard leaders, they are largely illegitimate and their proper and necessary changes of a mechanical transference, in type of even greater impact, the transference made possible by the condition of the leading faction of the CPSU. Trotsky's serious objection to the system of political leadership prevalent in the Comintern today is quite obvious from what he has reproduced in his book on the International Left Opposition, Trotsky the Stalinist. The non-Russian Trotsky groups live, or rather exist, in the reflected glory of the Russian Opposition. The basic program of the Trotsky group in America, for example, has nothing essential in common with the conditions of class struggle or the labor movement in this country; it is merely a translation into English of the standpoint of the Russian Opposition. What your opinion is about the Communist tasks in the trade union movement in this country as it has been stated in the report, is not a matter to be decided with what you opinions are on the possibility of building socialism in "one country." And the inner-life of the International Left Opposition reproduces with a ludicrous fidelity the regime of the Comintern. The same hero-cult, the same mysterious cases from on high, and the same summary expulsions and demonizing tactics (there are far more heterodox Trotskyites outside the fold than orthodox ones within it), the same high-sounding excommunications, the same at all points! Stalin is Pope, Trotsky is anti-Pope, we are against the Papal system as such, anywhere and everywhere.

The Trotskyites attempt to dignify their inverted Stalinism with the grand name of internationalism. But this is clearly misleading. Marxist internationalism is poles apart from the abstract pseudo-radicalism that strives to free itself from national limitations, or from the subjective and personal adventurism of the objective conditions in which it has to operate. To attempt to build a movement in America on the program of one or the other faction in the CPSU is not internationalism; it is a crisis form of inverted nationalism.

For these reasons and because its political system represents ultra-fascist in a theoretically complete form, Trotskyism offers no way out of the present crisis of world Communism. It is not only that, as an actual force in the Communist movement it is completely insignificant outside of the Soviet Union and Greece; it is not only that it has proved itself politically bankrupt in every major test of recent history (Spain, the German crisis); it is rather that in its very essence it is an organism of the disease that is consuming the official Communist movement today.

The Communist Opposition regards itself as an organized tendency in the Communist movements of the various countries and in the Communist International. It stands on the fundamental principles of Communism as developed by Marx, Engels and Lenin and confirmed by the experience of the proletarian struggles of all the various "proletarian" so recklessly flung about by the official Comintern and Trotskyites alike, that the Communist Opposition "soon finds its way to the b of Social Democracy," stand repudiated by the facts themselves. Today, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is the International Communist Opposition and it alone which has not only laid bare the nature and forms of the crisis in the world Communist movement, but which has quite definitely taken the road leading to its rehabilitation and unification.

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**Document No.4**

**The Need for Communist Unity (Excerpts)**

A letter from the International Communist Opposition to the Communist International, November 9, 1935.

Never was the unity of Communist forces so essential as it is today. Never were the facts and the evidence so obvious. The sound unification of the world communist movement is especially urgent today because of the acute danger of imperialist war and the growing menace of fascism. The resolutions of the Seventh World Congress have now been published and we have the reports in full and the discussions. After an examination of these decisions, we declare that we are willing to collaborate with all our energy in the execution of these decisions in the spirit of the following declaration made by Comrade Dimitrov in his summary speech at the Seventh Congress: "We want the
workers who belong to the Second International and the Amsterdam International and those workers who belong to other political organizations to discuss the questions raised by the resolution with us to bring us their practical proposals and supplementary proposals to try to get the best methods of application and to join us hand in hand to carry them out in practice.

Only an organized discussion and a thorough examination of all these questions, with the participation of the entire membership, can enable the Communist parties to utilize their own experiences as well as the experiences of the international Communist movement to avoid the mechanical transference of the experiences of one country to another and to replace concrete Marxist analyses for schematic and general formulas.

The resolution on Dimitrov's report, the Offensive of Fascism and the Tasks of the Comintern in the Struggle for the Unity of the Working Class Against Fascism contains the liquidation of the ultra-left trade union and united front policy. The resolution recognizes the "temporary defeat of the proletariat in Central Europe, in Germany, Austria and Spain." This does away with the nonsensical task of defending the defeat of the working class in Germany until the end of 1933. We welcome this and consider it as a pre-requisite for learning from the defeat.

Fascism is, on the one hand, correctly defined as the rule of finance capital. This is a welcome differentiation from the dangerous confusion of the essence of fascism which contributed considerably toward the Communist Party of Germany being unable to fulfill its tasks. The same resolution, however, contains the dangerous formula according to which fascism is the "open, terrorist dictatorship of the most chauvinist, the most imperialist elements of finance capital." This is both false and dangerous because it lends aid and comfort to the conception of the Social Democrats that other elements of finance capital can be expected to make a fight against the fascist dictatorship.

The resolution states that the united front is "the most important immediate task of the international labor movement in the present historical epoch." We welcome the strong emphasis upon, and the call for, the reformist organizations. This is especially urged in view of six years of ultra-leftism and the "united front from below." But the resolution lacks a similar emphasis upon, and the call for, the objective of the united front movement. The Seventh Congress gives direction for the united front for the next few months, but for a longer period. Therefore, the resolution should have stated expressly and unequivocally that the winning of political power by the working class is not possible through the united front movement. The seizure of political power presupposes that the Communist Party is already the leader of the majority of the working classes, i.e., the leader of the working class for an armed uprising, a civil war, and not only for partial and immediate demands as in the united front struggle. To be silent on this, for fear of repelling a temporary ally, will lead to opportunism and a possible collapse of the strong united front movement. The failure to uncover the limits of the united front movement led the majority of the working class was a lesson which should be taken by communists in case of the bourgeoisie of their country in the present time.

The greatest shortcoming of the resolution is that it does not give a correct analysis of the situation which should be taken by communists in case of the bourgeoisie of their country. We agree with section IV: "The Communist parties of all capitalist countries must fight against the working class, organization, and in case of the cases of the Communist Party of America. The united front movement is not weakened but strengthened through the clarification of its limits.

United front tactics can only serve as the means for furthering the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement for this purpose, to prepare clearly the limits of the united front movement is not weakened but strengthened through a clarification of its limits. United front tactics can only serve as the means for furthering the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement for this purpose, to prepare clearly the limits of the united front movement is not weakened but strengthened through a clarification of its limits. United front tactics can only serve as the means for furthering the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement for this purpose, to prepare clearly the limits of the united front movement is not weakened but strengthened through a clarification of its limits. United front tactics can only serve as the means for furthering the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement for this purpose, to prepare clearly the limits of the united front movement is not weakened but strengthened through a clarification of its limits.

We consider it unfortunate that the following section from the resolution was taken over without any criticism: "If, nevertheless, war should break out, it is their duty to work for its speedy termination." The formulation may be turned into an obstacle for the working class in a situation of a country which has started the war.
in the countries under the fascist (from the most authoritative and important non-partisan class organs of the bourgeoisie in those countries in the small towns and within the non-partisan broad class organs received as of the preliminary stages the unitary front movement's extra-parliamentary struggle for these organs, serious successful possibilities. The experiences had in the unitary front organs during the fronts form the starting point for the creation of such organs for partial demands into organs for the struggle for the workers' organization. Every organ suffers from a dangerous omission on the attitude of Communists toward our struggle. The incorrect statements by which we were to the effect that it is no true bourgeois democracy and put between bourgeois democracy and that the Communists in such a bourgeois democracy is not repeated solution: 

against fascism the bourgeoisie and gains of the toilers, in the fascist dictatorship, the front prepares its force, strengthens its allies and directs the struggle. 

The problem is inaccurate, but in the face of the rise created as to the relation of democracy it is inadequate. It is easy to dismiss our saying that the Communists do not defend such, not even when they are the rights of workers against the other reactionary. Even in the struggle within the bourgeois state no need for some extreme rules so far as the fascists are able to vote the rights of the workers can be seen but they are not. So the only way the bourgeoisie which is of fascism. We fight against the fascist rights of the workers. We fight rights to the fascists. 

The report of Comrade Ercoli on the relations to the preparation of a imperialist is more replete with limitations than the report itself. The resolution is that it does not of the attitude which should be directed against the exclusionary nature of their country of the Soviet Union in a war. 

Furthermore, the workers of all countries at war against military expenditures to the pledge of the Comintern. The resolution is that for the transformation of the anti-fascist inaction against the fascist instigators of fascism, for the overthrow of fascism into a war and for the victory of the Red Army and the Soviet Union. 

How well founded is our criticism of the omissions and shortcomings of the decisions of the Seventh Congress, can be seen from the various opportunities mistakes characterizing the policies of imperialist countries. The policies of the Communist Party of France are a clear example of the danger of right opportunism in the application of the united front tactics—a dangerous indication by the Seventh Congress itself. The CFP has given up regular and effective utilization of the reformist conceptions of social democracy from the viewpoint of Communist fundamentals. The erroneous idea that an alliance of the proletariat with the petty bourgeoisie working class is a People's Front—organized by an agreement with capitalist parties has led the CFP to neglect the most urgent tasks of the class struggle in France. The so-called People's Front policy of the CFP has hindered and continues to hinder an effective struggle against the emergency decrees of the national government because no agreement for such a struggle could, of course, be reached with the Radicals. Furthermore, in spite of the clear decisions of the Seventh Congress that a mass self-defense organization against fascism should be created, the CFP not only does not attempt to carry out this decision but publicly warns the workers against all efforts in this direction. This, likewise, is due to the tendency of the CFP to avoid friction with the Radicals in order to build up the so-called People's Front. 

The deviations in regard to bourgeois democracy manifest themselves in a particularly clear form when they are transferred mechanistically to countries where bourgeois democracy is still relatively strong and not yet seriously challenged by Fascists, as the former capitalist dictatorship (USA, Canada, England). In such countries the concentration of activities by the Communist Parties on the defense of democratic rights in general can only lead to the weakening of the struggle against the concrete manifestations of the attack by capitalist reaction which is preparing the way for fascism.

The war danger is more and more imminent. Mussolini has started a colonial war. Hitler is arming feverishly. The sharpening of class relations in Hitler Germany cannot be sufficiently utilized to organize mass resistance leading to the overthrow of fascism because of the present condition of the CPG and the weakness of all workers organizations. The lack of a CP in Italy able to fight effectively has encouraged Mussolini to seek escape from domestic difficulties by resorting to the advantage of war. We consider it our duty to do all in our power to strengthen the CP in every country so that they will be able to organize mass resistance and to give the Communist leadership. The trained underground members of the CPG-GO can be of invaluable aid in this. In America the CPO has won decisive positions in the trade unions which are an indispensable point for the application of the trade union tactics decided upon by the Seventh Congress. In other countries where there are ICO members and followers they can be a important part of the proletarian mass organization and possess trained cadres.

Our examination of the resolutions has led us to the following conclusions:

1. The resolutions offer the basis for the liquidation of the ultra-left course; 2. the basis for the application of the reform of the Comintern, considered by us as necessary, as decided by the Seventh Congress; 3. for correct united front tactics and a Communist trade union policy providing the broad working masses for Communist; 4. the fact that unclarity, omissions and errors are still to be found in the resolutions, and there is reluctance in the Comintern to their application, and that it can lead to dangerous right deviations do not constitute an obstacle to reunification as far as we are concerned. The omissions, errors and uncertainties can and must be eliminated in a broad organized discussion among the entire membership. Thus party democracy becomes possible for differing viewpoints, within the limits of communist fundamentals, of course, to exist and express themselves freely within the party, without impairing the discipline or weakening its fighting power. Party democracy means that a minority has the right to express its viewpoint within the limits of communist fundamentals but that the decisions of the majority are to be carried out by the entire membership regardless of differences of opinion. We don't ask for equal privileges. We are prepared to dissolve our organization when unity is established on the basis of inner-party democracy on the lines herewith indicated. Inner-party democracy for all members is for us sufficient for disciplined cooperation in the Comintern and its sections.

The Buro of the ICO, therefore, proposes a meeting with the representatives of the Comintern in order to talk over the concrete realizations of the unification of the ICO with the Comintern and its sections.
We ask the ECCI to name the place and the date and to inform us of same as soon as possible.

For the International Communist Opposition
Heinrich Brandt
Jay Lovestone

Editor's Note: The Communist International never responded to this letter.

Document No. 5

The People's Front Illusion (Excerpts)

The following is an abridged version of chapter one of Jay Lovestone’s 1937 pamphlet, The People's Front Illusion.

The Newest Line

The sum and substance of the newest line of the Comintern is the following: the present world situation, it holds, is everywhere characterized by a struggle between democracy (i.e. bourgeois or capitalist democracy) and fascism. In some countries fascism has already won. There the job of the Communist Parties is to do everything possible to restore this democracy (Germany). In other countries, the menace of fascism is growing in varying degrees (France, England, USA). In the main task of the communists is to save capitalist democracy from the onrushing hordes of fascism. In both cases, it is necessary for the Communist Parties to cooperate not only with organizations and political parties of the lower middle class but even with those of other sections of the capitalist class if the latter are prepared to defend the democratic state (form of government now prevailing in the USA, Great Britain and France). This collaboration of "all anti-fascist forces" is to be secured by the communists even at the cost of giving up both the right to propagate the principles of communism and the right of independent working class action in defense of the most elementary immediate interests of the proletariat.

More than that. This line is carried over into the realm of international policy. The programmatic declaration on the war question made by George Dimitroff, general secretary of the Communist International, provides for the various Comintern sections rallying to the defense of the democratic (capitalist) countries against the aggression of the fascist (capitalist) powers. This means that the Communist Parties are no longer to try to win over the working class to a program of militant class struggle against the imperialist ruling classes in those cases in which the capitalist classes insure their domination through the so-called democratic form of state—especially in case of a war with a fascist state. These tactics of class collaboration at home—in the so-called democratic countries—have been baptized with the name of People's Front. These tactics of defense of the "democraticfatherland" against fascist assaults are paraded as efforts in behalf of universal peace and progress. The latter is really an extension of the former. The two are organically tied together. Both sets of tactics are a monstrous violation of Marxist and Leninist teachings on the state and the revolutionary struggle against capitalism and against imperialist war. As "brilliant tactical maneuvers," as strategy modeled on the theory of the "Trojan Horse" (Dimitroff), they are suicidal. As an ever momentary break with communist principles, such moves are costly beyond calculation or repair. The apparent self-confidence of these tactics is based on a false consciousness of the nobility of the motives animating the tacticians. This criticism is not based on dogma or the mechanical parroting of a phrase or finding of Marx, Engels, Lenin—or even Stalin. It is the criticism of a policy which turns its back on some of the most fundamental experiences and lessons of history. We must continue to test theories and policies in the light of their real effects on life.

Back to First Principles

On this basis only will we examine some of the concrete acts of the Comintern and its sections, since its Seventh Congress in the summer of 1935. To do so it is necessary to recapitulate and reaffirm a number of positions which are axiomatic for all Marxists, for revolutionaries in all the labor movement. This repetition of the obvious is made necessary because since the Seventh Congress the CI, with increasing frequency and crudeness, has been acting in utter disregard and even contempt of the principles of communism in regard to bourgeois democracy and imperialist war. Besides, it is necessary to call attention to certain basic ideas and principles in order to see more clearly the sinister significance of the practical application of the newest line of the Comintern in the struggle against fascism and imperialist war.

In the days before the Seventh World Congress, Marxists, communists, never spoke of democracy in the abstract. They always realized there is no such thing as pure democracy in a society divided into classes. Today, the official communists seem to have forgotten, or at least act as if they had never learned, that modern history knows two kinds of democracy: the capitalist democracy of the type we have in the USA, Great Britain and France, and the proletarian democracy of the type we have in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it has always been the contention of all communists—that the Comintern as well as those in the International Communist Opposition—that, as the class struggle sharpens, the mask of demagogy is discarded and reveals capitalist dictatorship in its open ugly, brutal form—fascism. Until recently, the official communists went along with us in pointing out the organic connection between the capitalist dictatorship known as "democracy" and the capitalist dictatorship known as "fascism." Time and again Earl Browder himself pointed out how false it is to conclude that "fascism is the opposite of capitalist democracy" or that "this democracy is the means of combatting and defeating fascism." On countless occasions the party members were taught that it is important to counterpose "democracy against dictatorship" and that "capitalist democracy is not the enemy but the mother of fascism, that it is the destroyer but the creator of fascism" and that, while it is true that fascism destroys democracy, it is criminal "to propagate the falsehood that democracy will destroy fascism."

But "Conditions Have Changed"

Perhaps the official party leadership will explain that "conditions have changed" since Hitler triumphed in Germany. Would this have communist belief in fascism conquered Germany bourgeois democracy is no longer a mechanism by means of which its victims are deluded into approving their continued status as an oppressed lower class? Certainly the comrades in the leadership of the Comintern do not hold this attitude towards the capitalist conclusion that since Hitler came to power in Germany and the USA have become more democratic in their relations to the oppressed colonial masses in their own countries.

Let it turn to the field of international policy of the international class struggle. If in charge of the various sections or believe that, in the event of a war between France and fascist Poland on the one hand and Germany on the other, the Free France should become chauvinists and patriotism, national colors in order to defeat the field of battle? Would Comrades X and Y, Congress, etc., etc., have Comrade X voted for the establishment of the Free France on the Pacific in order to help against "fascist Japan"? And would they say that in a war against Nippon they USSR lined up with the USA, Washington-Wall Street governments, imperialist or progressive?

Background of Press

The present ultra-right line of the CI is quite a long way from the ultra-left line of yesterday. Some may be at a loss to understand how CI could swing from one extreme to the other. It is no great distance traversed when one goes from ultra-left to the ultra-right. The fundamental approach of the ultra-left line of yesterday and the ultra-right line of today are the same—both the Comintern has discarded examining and evaluating mass struggles from the point of view of a precise analysis of the historical situation. An examination of both lines of action of the CI is to be found in the third period article of the "Social-Fascism, " class against class," the French Socialists. It should be said that only the CI is trying to bring the "Social-Fascism, " the "Socialist Party of the Third Congress of the International Communist. The Greek "bourgeois party," the French Socialists. Today, in the days of the "people against the war," the Radicals have become so good again see no difference between Fascist and the CI in 1935. As a result, in both cases, in both periods, the CI is to be found in the same position—measuring in class terms. It is therefore only in the tendency to expand its influence. It is in both cases, in both periods, the CI is to be found in the same position—measuring in class terms. It is therefore only in the tendency to expand its influence. It is therefore only in the tendency to expand its influence.

In both cases, in both periods, the CI was the label of fascists or branded some who went so far as to herald the arrival of Germany as an essential "revolutionization" of society, and the ultra-right line of today is not a fantasy. It was printed in the "Social-Fascism," the "Socialist Party of the Third Congress of the International Communist. The Greek "bourgeois party," the French Socialists. Today, in the days of the "people against the war," the Radicals have become so good again see no difference between Fascist and the CI in 1935. As a result, in both cases, in both periods, the CI is to be found in the same position—measuring in class terms. It is therefore only in the tendency to expand its influence. It is therefore only in the tendency to expand its influence.

The Communist Party was right to label Social-Fascists to the Social-Democrats. The establishment of an open bourgeois democracy is no longer a mechanism by means of which its victims are deluded into approving their continued status as an oppressed lower class? Certainly the comrades in the leadership of the Comintern do not hold this attitude towards the capitalist conclusion that since Hitler came to power in Germany and the USA have become more democratic in their relations to the oppressed colonial masses in their own countries.

Let it turn to the field of international policy of the international class struggle. If in charge of the various sections or believe that, in the event of a war between France and fascist Poland on the one hand and Germany on the other, the Free France should become chauvinists and patriotism, national colors in order to defeat the field of battle? Would Comrades X and Y, Congress, etc., etc., have Comrade X voted for the establishment of the Free France on the Pacific in order to help against "fascist Japan"? And would they say that in a war against Nippon they USSR lined up with the USA, Washington-Wall Street governments, imperialist or progressive?
Marxist and Leninist teachings on revolutionary struggle against capitalism at war. As "brilliant tactical models" on the theory of theloff, they are suicidal. As an even communist principles, such moves for a"therapeutic" technology of the animating the tacticians. This organ of the mechanical parroting of Marx, Engels, Lenin—or even of a policy which turns its back on mental experiences and lessons of workers' theories and policies in the class on life.

First Principles

We examine some of the concrete and its sections, since its Seventh of 1935. To do it is necessary to a number of positions which are facts, for all revolutionary in the conception of the obvious is made the Seventh Congress the CI, with crudeness, has been acting in utter contempt of the principles to bourgeois democracy and it is necessary to call attention to nobles in order to see more clearly if the practical application of the theory in the struggle against fascism.

As in the Seventh World Congress, Marxists, of democracy in the abstract. They have no such thing as pure democracy to classes. Today, the official version of what is known are not truly effective, social-fascism. They are in the Soviet Union. To be the contentment of all countries as well as those in the Opposition—that, as the class speak of bourgeois democracy is an attack on democracy in the open.

Until recently, the official version of what is meant to point out the organic capitalistic dictatorship known as "social-fascist" as an attack on democracy in the open. Earl Browder himself pointed out that "fascism is the opposite of that which "democracy is the means for capitalist success. The millions of people who are told that a "Socialist democracy is the means of destroying fascism. It is true that it is "to propagate fascism will destroy fascism."

Days Have Changed"

Party leadership will explain that if since Hitler triumphed in the communists believe that since Hitler triumphed thus bourgeois democracy is no means of which its victims are their continued status as an "sadly the comrades in the leadership of the Comintern do not predict their new attitude towards the capitalist democracies on the conclusion that since Hitler came into power England, France, and the US. It becomes more and more genuinely democratic in their relations to the working classes and the oppressed colonial masses in their empire.

Let us turn to the field of international politics, that is, the field of the international class struggle. Would the comrades in charge of the various sections of the Comintern have us believe that, in the event of a war between democratic France and fascist Poland on the one side and fascist Germany on the other, the French and Polish workers should become chauvinists and patriots and rally to their national defense? Would the Comintern say that fascist Germany on the"field of battle" score Comrades Browder and Hathaway, for instance, have Comrade X and Mr. Y, if they were elected to Congress, vote for the establishment of defensive naval "bases in the Pacific in order to help defend democratic USA against "fascist Japan"? And would Browder or Hathaway say that on a war against Nipponese imperialism with the USSR lined up with the USA, the objectives of the Washington-Wall Street government would become non-imperialist or progressive?

Background of Present Course

The present ultra-right line of the Comintern may seem quite a long way from the ultra-left course which preceded it. Some may be at a loss to understand how it comes that the CI could swing from one extreme to the very opposite. There is no great distance traversed in this swing. First, extremes do not meet. The fundamental approach is identical in the ultra-left line of yesterday and the ultra-right line of today. In both cases the Comintern has disregarded the Marxist method of examining and evaluating mass movements and social struggles from the point of view of dynamic class relations.

An examination of both lines will reveal their blood-brotherhood and disclose the fact that the ultra-right line is not only the ultra-left line standing on its head. In the days of the third period and social-fascism, in the ultra-left days of "class against class," the French Socialist Party (SFIO) was held to be so bad that the Comintern could see no difference between this Socialist Party of Blum and the Radical Party of Herrick. Then the French Socialist Party was a "bourgeois party." Today, in the ultra-right period, in the days of the "people against the two hundred families," the Radical Party has become so good that the Comintern can again see no difference between the Radical Party of Dohleidler and the Socialist Party.

In both cases, in both "periods," the Comintern failed to measure in class terms. It, therefore, arrived at a false estimate in each instance. Here is the common root of the two types of errors, branching out in opposite directions.

In the ultra-left course, with its theory of social-fascism, the Comintern refused to recognize any difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism. In those days all parties, with the exception of the official communist organizations, were labeled fascist or branded social-fascist. Then, the CI went so far as to herald the arrival of a fascist regime in Germany as an essential prerequisite for the "revolutionization" of the masses. This description of policy is not a fantasy, it is a "resolution of the Presidium of the Comintern on the situation in Germany," after Hitler took power:

The Communist Party was right in giving the name of social-fascists to the Social Democrats.

The establishment of an open fascist dictatorship, by destroying all currents among the masses and liberating them from the influence of socialist democracy, accelerates the rate of Germany's development towards proletarian revolution.

(Communist International, No. 8, pp. 245-246, May 1, 1935)

When this outrageous stuff was gospel in the Comintern, all conflicts within and between bourgeois parties were considered to be "bourgeois internal battles." Consider its position with that of the American party leadership in the last campaign when it sought to find fundamental differences between Roosevelt and Landen. A veritable H-bomb treaty! There is nothing more fallacious than the conclusion that the wrong policy turned on its head becomes correct policy.

Though the ultra-left theory prevented viewing class relations and divisions as they actually were, it had one redeeming feature. In the days before the Seventh World Congress of the CI it was not only permissible but imperative for the various parties to stress the independent role of the proletariat as a class. Then, there was no loose talk about that fantastic and vague concept, the "people." The mistake then lay in the assumption that the Communist Parties had already assumed the leadership of the working class. Thus, there resulted the fallacious substitution of the independent action of the party as such for the independent action of the working class as a whole.

False Approach Persists

Applying an equally un-Marxist method today, and moved by despair over the defeats brought on by the ultra-left course, the Comintern has flown in panic to the ultra-right strategy of the People's Front.

According to the People's Front theory, fascism is not a form of the rule of the bourgeoisie as a class, but rather the "dictatorship of the most imperialist, the most chauvinist elements of finance capital" (resolution of the Seventh World Congress). Hence, in France, fascist would appear to be a dictatorship of the wealthiest "two hundred families." In the USA, we shall perhaps soon be told that fascism is a dictatorship of the famous "four hundred" over all the rest of the capitalists as well as over all the workers and farmers.

Only on this basis can one comprehend the proposal to set up a united front of all the people which would include not only the working class but also the petty bourgeoisie and that section of the capitalist class which does not belong to "the most imperialist, the most chauvinist elements of finance capital." It is only on the basis of such an approach that the Communist Party of the USA could get out a special Christmas Day issue of its central organ, the Daily Worker, in which it declared editorially: "The Pope was ill-advised in the utterance which he made"—the attack on world communism.

In the same Christmas Day issue of the Daily Worker, there was featured without comment or criticism the following holiday greetings from Dorothy Day, editor of the Catholic Worker:

"The Catholic Worker joins in an appeal for democracy and peace and, therefore, asks you to join in a protest against all dictatorships—fascist and bolshevist; against all suppression of civil liberty—fascist and bolshevist. This includes freedom of speech, freedom of education and organization—against all war, whether imperialist, civil or class. Merry Christmas. (Daily Worker, December 25, 1936.)"

This shameful anti-working class epistle could appear in a paper calling itself communist only on the basis of the People's Front theory.
Antonio Gramsci and the Italian Revolution
by Lucio Colletti

One of the most dramatic, yet shadowy, events touched upon by Giuseppe Fiori in his Antonio Gramsci: Life of a Revolutionary [Now published in English: N.B., 1976] is the disagreement between Gramsci on the one hand and Togliatti and the Italian Communist Party on the other, after the political 'turn' brought about by the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International. To prevent any speculation, it should immediately be added that the revelation of this dispute does not date from Fiori's book. Already Rinnovata of December 1964, in a brief comment following the publication of Athos Lita's report on Gramsci in prison, pointed out that between 1928 and 1933 the positions of Gramsci at Tuci 'showed a way of thinking not only objectively inconsistent with the policy of the Party but actually critical of it on a whole range of questions that had emerged from the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the International, its Sixth World Congress and later its Tenth Plenum and to which 'the politics of the Italian Party adapted itself'. Fiori's undoubted achievement, is not so much to have actually discovered this disagreement, as to have made the first attempt to set it explicitly into its historical context and to give it a historically-political evaluation (from which we, however, disagree on a crucial point). He has also enriched and clarified its nature with new information, of which one of the more important items is the decisive testimony rendered by Gennaro Gramsci's elder brother, shortly before his death.
diary

Oct 9th, 1970

Today, we are no longer in a posture to the bourgeoisie in order to control the People's Front strategy. The People's Front strategy is in the basic fact of the present revolutionary nature of the bourgeoisie. For one thing, this treaty with the petty bourgeoisie is not to be reduced to some sort of compromise that would do well to remember and be

Gio Grasimi
The Italian Revolution
by Lucio Colletti

We shall assume total ignorance on the part of the reader and resume briefly Fiori's account. In 1928-30 Stalin, who was then engaged in a violent struggle against Bukharin, imposed a sharp break with the latent, that is the 1920s. Stalin's drive in the following terms. Capitalism is in its death throes and the destruction of bourgeois power will be immediately followed by the dictatorship of the proletariat, without any need for an intermediate stage of trade union and intermediate objectifies. Social-democracy is not only a non-revolutionary, an instrument with which the bourgeoisie tries to arrest the revolutionary impetus of the masses, but is itself a form of bourgeois rule: it is, in effect, a second layer of the old order. Therefore, the only way to proceed is to conduct isolated struggle for the destruction of capitalism, outside any system of alliances. Their aim should be the frontal class of classes and, in the specific instance of the Italian Party, all-out struggle against the 'Justice and Freedom' group and against both Catholic and republican anti-fascist forces.

The crude and sectarian character of this Stalinist line is quite clear. It was sectarian because it maintained an equilibrium between social-democracy and fascism and because it failed to base its policies on any serious analysis of the concrete situation. It was simply absurd in the case of Italy where fascist reaction and terror had long ago succeeded in breaking up and decimating the organized power of the proletariat. Grasimi's thesis, put forward at the Congress of Lyons, were thereby turned upside down.

How did the PCI respond to the new Stalinist directive? It split. Troffio, Togliatti, Campini, Rava and Longo adapted themselves to the turn. Alfonso Leonetti, in charge of the clandestine press, Paolo Ravazzoli, leader of the trade-union movement, and Pietro Tresso, in charge of the underground organization, rejected it. All three were expelled for this: first from the leadership, then from the Central Committee and finally from the Party.

It is here that Gennaro Grasimi's testimony must be introduced. He was an exile, living in Paris, when he was charged by Togliatti to go and visit Antonio in prison in Turin, to inform him of the recent vicissitudes and to find out his point of view. According to Fiori Gennaro told him that he found Antonio actively hostile to the expulsions and sharing the opposition to the turn. Altogether, Grasimi was in agreement with Leonetti, Tresso and Ravazzoli on the question of the turn, thought their expulsion unjustified and rejected the International's new policy to which, he thought, Togliatti had agreed too hastily.

However, on his return to Paris, as he was later to recall to Fiori, Gennaro went to Togliatti and told him: 'Nino is in complete agreement with you'. The reason for this move, as Gennaro explained, was his fear that the accusation of opportunism, given the heat of the struggle and the determination of the group around Togliatti to suppress all dissent, would have been levied even against his own brother. 'Had I told a different story, even not Nino would have been saved from expulsion', [Fiori, p. 253.]

But even Gennaro's prudent move turned out to be not quite sufficient. Towards the end of 1930 Grasimi decided to start a new political education class among his prison comrades and to give a series of talks during the exercise hour in the courtyard. Some comrades (Attilio Losso among others), who were already aware of the new policy of the International and the Party, contended with and confronted his thesis. Left to him and subjected to slanderous accusations, Grasimi decided to break off relations with them, and withdrew into isolation. From then on Fiori has commented 'there is no indication, written or oral, of any attempt by Grasimi to contact any member of the Party (at any level, whether in exile or not) during the remaining years in prison and afterwards during his recovery at the Casamino clinic in Formia (where he was allowed to go out a number of times) and at the Quisquina clinic in Rome'. Tresso wrote that the Party had expelled Grasimi. For its part, Stato Operaio, which was being published in Paris under Togliatti, failed to mention Grasimi's name in the list of expelled members.

Fiori's narrative, resumed here almost in his own words, ends at this point. The authenticity of this narrative has been vindicated by many sources. It has been corroborated by two Communists who were in the Turin prison together with Grasimi. It has been further corroborated by Attilio Losso's report to Togliatti and the Party Centre (evidently at the request of the leaders) on the then held and defended by Grasimi in his opposition to the turn. Finally it has been confirmed by Erino Riboldi, a Communist deputy, who was also imprisoned at Turin. According to Riboldi, in March of 1931 Grasimi had received an English publication which contained, in invisible ink, resolutions of the Congress of Cologne (which ratified the turn) and, in a fit of irritation, gave the following appraisal of Stalin: 'We must bear in mind that Lenin's intellectual scope was quite different from that of Stalin. Lenin, who had lived abroad for many years, had an international view of socio-political problems. The same cannot be said of Stalin. Having never left Russia, he retained the nationalistic mentality, the mentality which can be seen in the outlook of "great Russians." We must be on our guard, for inside the International as well Stalin is first a Russian'.

Two main objections have been raised against Fiori's book, by U. Sardia, local Party secretary, in Rinascita, a note with a similar theme in L'Unita, and a note with a similar theme in La Città. The essence of their complaints is this. The reasons, writes Sardia, for the expulsion of Grasimi were not leadership, nor membership in a group led by Togliatti and Ravazzoli.

No doubts grave errors of political perspective and method were committed, but 'the essential element of the turn was the dramatic effect, resulting in an almost superhuman tension, to conduct the anti-fascist struggle inside the country'. Other arguments against Fiori are more general. They appeal to the complexity of the historical period, reproach Fiori with a certain schematism in attributing the 'turn' solely to Stalin, evoke the need for further research, study and meditations. These considerations are all impeccable. But they do not cancel the impression that by exaltating virtue to the sky they make it unattainable and that in placing 'historical truth' on high and inaccessible peaks they condemn one to the plain. What Rinascita, in particular, offers is not only unenlightening but ultimately does not square with the facts. Why did not Grasimi recover his contacts with the Party? Why did he stay isolated after Turin even when, as in the case of Formia, he was allowed to go out freely? Rinascita cites the state of his health as the reason. 'It seemed that Grasimi was going to die any day, so much were the conditions under which he continued to live evoked emotional freedom'. This is unfortunately true, but this truth, pushed to the limit, turns into its opposite. Set free on October 29th 1943, even if only conditionally, Grasimi continued to work and write. 'I am still living', as he used to say, writes Fiori in his book—a biography which restores Grasimi to his ethico-political greatness without any false glitter of hagiography—'driven almost insane by suffering, continuously bordering on the superhuman, at this stage in his life. Even now, he could still react to the remorseless disintegration of his physical health, of all his energies like a man breaking out into the still centre instead of giving up or disappearing, he concentrated the last of his resources on
severe intellectual work. To the Formia period (1934-5) belong five notebooks begun at Turin, and another eleven contained completely in the "Sassuolo clinic." [Fiori, p. 286.]

This is what happened. What now I want to ask is the following: in the name of what political practice did Gramsci oppose the turn? What was his own strategic perspective?

Those who compare the Lenins theses with the exposition of Gramsci's thought outlined in Althusius' report cannot but notice the essential homogeneity of the two documents. Between 1926 and 1932 (which is the time limit of Althusius's report) and, in the absence of proof to the contrary, until his death, the fundamentals of Gramsci's political thought did not change. Naturally this thought became more complex and profound over time, but—and this is the vital point—it never departed from its basic line of inspiration. The general theme of this thought (as it already emerged in the Lyons theses) is the actuality of the socialist revolution. In Europe, Gramsci wrote, 'the objective conditions for the proletarian revolution have existed for the past fifty years.' This is the case above all in Italy. Although capitalism has developed in a weaker and more backward form than in other Western countries (Gramsci wrote forty years ago), this does not mean that the Italian revolution will be bourgeois-democratic on the contrary, Italy, like Russia (and this is the lesson learnt from Lenin and 1917), 'is the weakest link in the capitalist chain—which can, and should, be the first to break.'

The attainment of this strategic objective demands, because of Italian backwardness, specific tactics: since the Italian proletariat does not form the majority on its own, it must win over the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie. ‘Without these alliances no serious revolutionary movement is possible for the proletariat.’ The need for these alliances is based on two fundamental conditions: to muster a force strong enough, and it is with this in mind that the "turn" (the Party has as its objective the violent conquest of power) and to be able to act with popular consent. The same argument was developed by Lenin in 1917. The insufficient strength of the Russian proletarian masses, their inadequate consciousness and organization, wrote Lenin, forces them to look for allies. Which allies? ‘Russia today is in a state of effervescence. Millions and tens of millions of men and women have woken up and are drawn into political activity. For most part they are peasants and petty bourgeoisie. Russia is a country where the peasantry is the majority. These then are the allies. On the other hand ‘the less organizational experience the Russian masses possess, the more decisively we should proceed to set up organizational structures for their action. ’The party of the proletariat should by no means think in terms of a national, but a class struggle in a country of small peasantry until the overwhelming majority of the population has acquired an awareness of the necessity of the socialist revolution.’

Gramsci and Lenin

Gramsci, without necessarily knowing these writings of Lenin, reasoned in a similar manner. In order to demolish fascism and proceed to the socialist revolution, the Italian proletariat must first win over to it wide strata of the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry. However, the direct struggle for the conquest of power is a step to which these strata can be brought only very gradually. Therefore: ‘the first step to which they should be directed is which leads them to express themselves on the constitutional and institutional plane. The first address should be a Constituent Assembly.’ (Besides, the first article of the Bolshevik Party's programme included the Constituent Assembly.) But the possibility of transcending intermediate slogans—which mark the various phases in winning over these social strata and thus altering the relation of forces'to the advantage of the working class—demands that the action of the Party should also be aimed at 'distributing all programs of powerful social reform' and demonstrating to the Italian working class that the only solution possible in Italy is the proletarian revolution.

These are the general outlines of Gramsci's Leninist conception (it can, of course, be debated how much of it is still relevant today). One can well understand why Gramsci could not possibly have been in agreement with Stalin and have adapted himself, like Togliatti, to the turn of 1928. It should be stressed that Gramsci's opposition was not inspired by petty and local motives, let us say, of a 'national' kind. He opposed the turn because he considered it fatal; the revolution and the interests of the working class. He opposed the liquidation of the 'three' because he opposed the Stalinization of the Italian Party, just as in 1926 (again against Togliatti) he was opposed to the Stalinization of the Bolshevik Party. 'Today you risk destroying your own handiwork, you are degrading and may even annul completely the leading position which the CPSU acquired under the direction of Lenin. It seems to us that your passionateman fashionable Russian questions is making you lose sight of the international implications of these questions, and is causing you to forget that your duty as Russian revolutionaries must and can be fulfilled only with reference to the international working class.' [See Fiori, p. 214.]

Now, what are the errors of political judgment in Fiori's book? He continuously underlines, in a very one-sided fashion, the 'democratic nature' of Gramsci's orientation, thereby losing and weakening many of its essential features—such as the anti-democratic emphasis at the very origin of L'Ordine Nuovo, which took shape in the specific forms and interpretation of the slogan 'defeat the clique.' [Councils] of 1919-20 to the 'Workers' and Peasants' Congress of 24-35. Not content with this, Fiori, in the subsequent discussion aroused in the press by his book has substituted the so-called 'Popular Front' policy for Gramsci's Leninist line.

The logic of his argument is of discorncinating simplicity, 'in 1935 the Fifth Congress of the International had taken place. Stalin's theory of social-fascism had demonstrated all its flaws, absurdity and tragic abstraction... With the shelving of the suicidal policy, the policy of the popular anti-fascist fronts was revived, namely a return to Gramsci. Gramsci's position becomes once again the policy of the Popular Front.' This policy appears here as a fantasy distraction. In 1928, at the time of the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, the Italian Party, under pressure from Stalin, renounces the correct line. In 1935, at the Seventh Congress, the situation is reversed. Gramsci's line is taken up again by the Italian Party and the Italian Party line becomes also that of Stalin.

The facts which refute this thesis and which, on account of space, I shall only indicate, are the following: 1. 'popular front' policy was exclusively concerned with the defence of bourgeois democratic institutions, and not with the socialist revolution; 2. the international working-class movement derived this policy from a strategy hinged on the defence of the Soviet State. This defence as such was necessary and fundamentally correct. But it is quite clear that it did not need to be externally propagated by Stalin, in the interest of political realism, at this date wanted to avoid the spread of fascism in Europe, namely the encroachment of USSR by fascist states—all the more so when the conviction that all the capitalist countries, from France and the United States, were becoming fascist in the end, since fascist was the political rule of contemporary manipulation of the international 'popular front' line was all too clear in the vagueness and indeterminateness of programmatic platform on which it constituted. Their content remained in the 'completeness' of the bourgeois, consequently alliances were established with a common denominator. Second—precisely because of what they were—entered into the arena of intragovernmental politics. Thirdly, in the fact that the fascist parties never involved them in any forms and means of achieving social democracy, contrary, it implied supine acquiescence in their model.

The 'Popular Front' line, in other words 'duplicity,' was completely means from ends, of tactics from bourgeois-democratic institutions—a defence, a tactic. It was never, in the name of social democracy implies a drive to push their class limits into a revolutionary State.

On the contrary. The strategic aim of power and the transition to the means adapted to the state of maturity struggle inside individual countries—outside interests—as in the People's War, where the various 'fronts' form so-called 'united front' regimes installed by the Red Army. 'duplicity' (what Togliatti, speaking in international, once called even more not was an accidental but an integral part of the Communist Party, which was the same thing for the adherence and support of the Hungarian and Italian Communist Parties.) This thesis is also a study of Stalin's policy, again of his intransigent defence and support for the Neul Blum (that self-confessed 'traitor') or of the Molotov in the case of the Molotov's way to an incommensurate attention in certain 'social' character.

These are the essential features of the Seventh Congress. One of the little basis there was for the attempt to Amendola and Sereni in Critical Opposition against the Sixth and the resolution to erase the deep continuities between the Congress, 'Insegnalementi del Congresso.' Communist Party, against the Ministry for the Marxiana, July-August 1965; Enrico Marxism, Una Discussione sulle Politiche Nazionali.' Critica Marxiana, July-August 1965; Enrico Amendola writes that 'the Sixth Congress of the Partito owned no longer any place for dissidents, for the leadership and then within the line, then even less room for opponents, of an 'objectively' occupying the position of the left, and this work of their adversaries available means. The line of the provoking within the Community
...the party should also be armed as a "vanguard of peaceful social reform" and a "vanguard of the world working class that the only authentic revolutionary movement in the capitalist world, the Italian workers' movement is in the forefront of the proletariat, for it is the vanguard of the working class,"Gramsci explains. But this does not mean that all Italian workers were necessarily "socialist" in the traditional sense.

The outlines of Gramsci's Leninist creed, however, are so clear that it is difficult to understand how many of his followers could have failed to grasp the implications of his arguments. In the case of Stalin, for example, it is clear that his policies were motivated, at least in part, by a desire to strengthen the Soviet Union and its allies against Western imperialism. Stalin was, after all, a key figure in the early days of the Soviet Union, and his ideas and policies were widely regarded as central to its success.

Stalin's policies were deeply influenced by his own personal experiences and the needs of the Soviet Union. For example, he was a strong advocate of central planning and state ownership of key industries, and he was determined to ensure that the Soviet Union remained strong and independent. These policies were also shaped by the need to confront Western imperialism and the threat of war.

In conclusion, the importance of the early days of the Soviet Union cannot be overstated. The success of its policies and the rise of the Soviet Union as a major power were the result of a combination of factors, including the policies of Stalin and the needs of the Soviet Union. The early days of the Soviet Union remain a source of inspiration and hope for those who seek a more just and equitable society.

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