

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE

FLIGHT

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

ORGAN OF THE MARXIST GROUP (TROTSKYISTS)

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EDITORIAL

THE POPULAR FRONT IN BRITAIN

THE Popular Front is a popular fraud. As always it is the workers who will be deceived, the workers who will have to pay. And in this age in which we live, the price will be heavy. If the workers allow themselves to be fooled then, unless a revolutionary party has been formed in time, Mosley (or the British Hitler, whoever he may be) will have his road made clear to him. That is what the Popular Front has done in Greece, where Metaxas is dictator. That is what cleared the way for Franco's attempt. The Popular Front in France has been cracking from the moment the workers went into the factories for the stay-in strikes. It may fly to pieces at any moment, leave the workers demoralised and disillusioned, and strengthen the Fascist bands of La Rocque and Doriot. The British worker must take warning from these events. A Popular Front Government is bound to fail. And not only the examples we have given but a little reflection will show why.

What exactly would be a Popular Front in England? The Stalinists want a combination of the Communist Party, the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Party to fight for democracy against Fascism. The Stalinists try in vain to disguise the Popular Front as a mass movement. Quite true they organised in France huge demonstration of the masses for the Popular Front, but the French workers came out, the Stalinist orators, Cachin, Thorez, Duclos and the rest, the Socialist orator, Leon Blum, the French Radicals, Herriot and Daladier (corresponding roughly to our Liberals) all of them made long speeches and then sent the workers back home again. Not one single action except these demonstrations was ever organised by the Popular Front. The Fascist Leagues paraded with

armoured cars and aeroplanes. The Bolshevik-Leninists (the Trotskyists) called for Workers Defence Corps. The Stalinists said no: called it a provocation. The Stalinists could see La Roque's aeroplanes and armoured cars as well as anybody else. Their press was full of it. But they knew that immediately the workers started to arm, the Radicals, being a capitalist party, would break up the Popular Front. No capitalist party will stand for any Workers Defence Corps, so the Stalinists condemned the Defence Corps. A French Government of which Herriot was a member had made drastic cuts in the workers' wages. But this very Herriot was one of the leaders of the Popular Front. The Stalinists therefore had to stifle the struggle against the wage-cuts. They complained that neither the Radical party nor the Socialist Party would organise Committees of Defence against Fascism, nor fight against the cuts outside of Parliament. But though millions of French workers were following them, they dared not take the initiative and fight. For the moment they had done so, the capitalists and the Socialist parliamentarians would have left them. The masses, and the mass demonstrations are the revolutionary decoration to what is essentially a parliamentary bloc between liberals and workers; and whenever the interests of the workers and the interests of the capitalists clash, the Stalinists give way to the capitalists.

Is this only for France and not for Britain? Not at all. The Stalinists have started the same game here. The Trotskyists issued a leaflet on October 4th calling for the Workers' Defence Corps. The militant workers in the East End are ready to meet Fascist hooligans with their own organised force. The *Daily Worker* of October 9th called this leaflet "provocative and disruptive." Three

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years ago they would have been calling for the Defence Corps. But they know that if they do so to-day the Liberals whom they want to come into their Popular Front will not come. They will organise demonstrations, for "liberty" and "democracy" and "peace" and "anti-fascism," but that is all they did in France and the signs are clear that that is all they will do here.

For years they have preached about the downfall of capitalism. Nothing but socialism can save the working class, they argued. But the Popular Front programme does not want to destroy capitalism. It aims at restoring purchasing power destroyed by the crisis and lessening unemployment.

So now workers are to join with capitalists to patch up capitalism; while at the same time hundreds of Stalinist books, pamphlets and leaflets are still on sale preaching that this is the last crisis of capitalism; that Fascism is a sign of capitalism in decay, etc., etc. Does any worker believe that any government can restore capitalism? Does any worker believe that the Liberals will fight his battles? Every worker knows that the moment British capitalism was in danger in 1931, the Liberals ran to form the National Government. In every municipal election, the Liberals always join with the Tories to smash the workers' parties. The workers know that the French workers gained some paper concessions not on account of the Popular Front but because they went into the factories, and British workers do not need Liberals to show them how to occupy British factories. The Stalinists know all this. They have said it for years. Every worker has heard them say it a thousand times.

Why, then, do they fight so hard for this Popular Front? It is because Pollitt, Campbell and the rest of them are carrying out Stalin's orders and using the working-class movement for the benefit of Soviet foreign policy. The Soviet bureaucracy used the German Communist Party for the same purpose and so destroyed the German workers' movement. They are doing the same thing in France to-day and they are working with might and main to use the British worker for the same purpose. In Germany, in 1931, the Communist Party under orders from the Executive Committee of the International formed a United Front with the Fascists to get the Prussian Social Democratic Government, i.e. a Labour Government, out of power and let the Hitler-Goebbels government in. They actually had begun a campaign against the Fascists when Moscow made them change.* Three months after the Stalinists raised the criminal slogan "After Hitler, our turn"; in other words, "let the Fascists come in." Stalin wanted the Fascists in power because he wanted to keep up the antagonism between France and Germany, and

so, in his misguided view, save Russia from attack. Hitler manoeuvred with Russia for one year, but as soon as he found himself firmly in the saddle he showed that his main object of attack was not France but Russia as the Trotskyists had ceaselessly warned. Stalin then began to use the French workers for his foreign policy. The French Stalinists under orders began to clamour for a Popular Front against Fascism. The workers believed that it was against Fascism, but the Fascism these Stalinists meant was chiefly Hitler, the enemy of the Soviet Union. Herriot, the Radical, was in favour of the Franco-Soviet Pact, and the Stalinists sacrificed everything for that. That is why they would not fight the cuts that Herriot had helped to impose, would not form the Defence Corps, crushed the workers' struggle, all to please Herriot and get the alliance Stalin wanted. When the stay-in strikes began they fought their hardest to check them, all for the Popular Front and Stalin's alliance. To-day they think of nothing but getting French workers to fight with the French bourgeoisie against Hitler, and these infamous scoundrels in the French Stalinist paper *Humanité* of July 29th have offered the hand of friendship to the sincere Fascists. By sincere, they mean those who will fight against Germany.

Now we can see why they want a Popular Front in Britain. It is to fight for the League of Nations and an alliance between Britain, France and Russia. It is the blood of the British workers they are after. Listen to J. R. Campbell in his pamphlet "Peace—But How?" He says that the workers in fighting against Hitlerite Germany must carry on "a class policy independent of the Government." Will the British worker swallow that fantastic absurdity? Either you fight for your ruling class against Hitler or you fight against your ruling class and Hitler together. You cannot fight against Hitler with Baldwin and Duff Cooper and Winston Churchill and still carry on an independent class policy. Campbell and the rest of these Stalinist agents know that. But, says Campbell, "This would clear the way for the defeat of our own capitalist class once the main fascist aggressor was defeated." Let this sink into the consciousness of the British worker. Never must he forget it. The Stalinists want him to deal with his own capitalists after Hitler is defeated. That is what the Stalinist Popular Fronters are after. They want the British worker to put off his struggle until "the main fascist aggressor is defeated." The Liberals want to be against Hitler in the coming war, and the Stalinists want to use that to further the Russian alliance. It is because we expose them that they miss no chance of slandering us.

Do not be driven to the slaughter, workers. The Russian workers want your assistance, but to fight against capitalism, not with it. Fight for the Workers' Front. We want no Liberals, for Liberals are Capitalists and Capitalists join with workers only to deceive. The Stalinists say we must get the middle classes. We will get some of them, but we shall never get those Liberal parliamentarians to fight for the workers. The bank clerks in France, the insurance clerks, the girls in offices, no sooner saw the great mass strike than they rushed to strike themselves. That is the way the Bolsheviks got the middle classes in Russia, that is the way we shall get many of them here: by action, but not by making parliamentary programmes with Liberal politicians. The Labour Party rank and file must demand the workers'

federation, all working class parties in an agreed programme, for example, against conscription, for the abolition of the Means Test, for the Workers' Defence Corps against Fascism.

The I.L.P. worker must demand that James Maxton make a public declaration against his pernicious article in the *News Chronicle* advocating a Popular Front; or drive him and the other I.L.P. Popular Fronters from the party. The rank and file C.P. member must demand explanations from his leaders. Why has the Communist Party been advocating a Front of Frenchmen in France? Why does it offer an alliance to Fascists? Why does it carry banners for the "Unity of the English people"? What has become of the class struggle? Why did Andrews in his "Labour Party and the Menace of War" in 1934 p. 22 say that if Fascist Germany attacked the U.S.S.R. the British worker was "under no circumstances to support the British and French Governments"? Russia was in

the League then. Russia is in the League to-day. What are the circumstances which have changed to explain so complete a somersault, so gross a betrayal of revolutionary principles? Circumstances have not changed. It is the Stalinist bureaucracy that has changed its foreign policy and is using the workers' movement to support it. No Popular Front! No alliance between Liberals and workers! It always breaks down and the workers suffer. No Front of Frenchmen. No Unity of the British people. The only slogan is a Workers' Front and those comrades who want to struggle for it must draw together under the banner of the Fourth International and out of their struggles build, and build quickly, the new revolutionary party, without which the British workers cannot conquer.

*) We give the Stalinists one month to deny this in any paper. We have the proofs and will print them in our next number.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EDINBURGH

By a Comrade of the Labour Party.

THE Edinburgh Conference of the Labour Party can only be fully understood when it is placed in its proper perspective, against a background of shifting alliances in World Imperialism, of the present critical stage in the life-and-death struggle between Capitalism and the working class.

Abyssinia marked the turning point in British strategy, her abandoning of the League as her main instrument in World Affairs. From now on it is to be the good old British policy of Power Politics and a line-up against her most dangerous enemy. But this is by no means a simple question. For instance, which is the most dangerous, the most immediate threat: Communism or Germany? Churchill, oracle of British Imperialism, cannot make up his mind, nor can many others in high command. Consequently, a hard-boiled empirical attitude is maintained; a vigilant eye is cast in the direction of German re-armament, of German aspirations in Middle Europe, and an active hand is engaged in fighting and suppressing working class activity, whether it be in Spain or in the British Empire.

The other portion of this background to the Edinburgh Conference is to be found in the fundamental laws of Capitalism that present Civilisation daily more categorically with two ruthless alternatives: either a victorious Class War for the establishing of Communism or a series of Imperialist Wars beside which the last one will seem no more than a sham battle. The concrete working out of these alternatives began with the Russian Revolution. The Russian workers and peasants, led by Lenin and Trotsky, did not hesitate in their choice. Since 1917, the same choice has been posed before the rest of the working class with more and more acuteness. In 1933, the German working class, groomed for battle, heard no signal from its Communist Party, or from the stronghold of the Revolution in Moscow. Hopelessly divided by treacherous reformist and Stalinist policies, it capitulated to reactionary Capitalist violence without a struggle. The terrible lesson of Germany at least made the Austrian

workers fight before they were crushed by Fascism. And as both these lessons were driven home to the working class elsewhere, their effect was demonstrated by the strong urge for unity in France among the workers of the Socialist and Communist Parties, an urge that was exploited by the respective bureaucracies in their own interests or rather in the interests of French Capitalism, and found its expression in the class-collaborating Popular Front. Similarly, in Spain, the willingness of the working class to face and fight its eternal enemy was translated into electoral manoeuvres with the capitalists that paved the way for the ultimate Fascist onslaught.

To-day, therefore, the British Working Class is confronted with a smashed and disorganised working class over the greater part of Europe. It sees the Spanish workers fighting for their lives against Spanish Fascism and International Capitalism, the real power and source of support for Spanish Fascism. It hears the rumbling of approaching Fascist coups in France and Belgium while Blum, Thorez, Vandervelde and the rest toady in vain to their Capitalist bosses for an extension of bourgeois democracy, a luxury that Capitalism can no longer afford. The British Working Class begins to realise that soon these questions will be posed in Britain.

Here, then, were the basic problems that set the tone to Edinburgh. On the one hand, the Labour bureaucrats were completely in the dark as to what their masters required of them. Last year, they had loyally supported the Abyssinian adventure that had ended so disastrously. The main leads that had been given them on foreign policy since, were the re-armament programme and Spanish non-intervention, questions in which there was no division of opinion in Tory high councils. "Therefore," said Bevin, "we are for the re-armament programme and Spanish non-intervention." But some of the Labour Party leaders were still a bit worried. Morrison complains in *Forward*, 17/10/36: "If the Government could really satisfy us that it could be trusted to pursue the right (!) policy, it would receive no factious opposition from the Labour

Movement. But honestly, we do not know what the Government's policy is. We are very doubtful whether the Government itself knows."

To this pathetic wail the Government can give no answer for the very good reason that there are still a number of unknowns in the picture. For instance, how far can Russia be trusted? Churchill in the *Evening Standard*, October 16th, recently posed the question this way. Accepting the Moscow Trial at its face value, as an evidence of good faith; recognising that as far as Stalin is concerned, the World Revolution is dead, Churchill is prepared to consider Russia as a serious ally against Germany. And that is a large step for Churchill. Garvin of the *Observer*, however, is still waiting for Stalin to liquidate poor old Litvinov who annoys Garvin with his shouting at Geneva.

Then there is the question of Spain and France. Perhaps by some miracle, the workers of Spain will be successful. That would alter the picture drastically. It would undoubtedly give the French and British workers a powerful impulse forward on the path of Revolution. In such a case, the British ally would have to be Germany. So British Imperialism must watch developments, meanwhile increasing the tempo of re-armament. If the Master isn't quite sure of his plans, what right has the servant to be impatient? That can be the only answer to Morrison. Or better, let him learn a lesson from Bevin, who has no misgivings about the course that is to be followed. Bevin, of course assures us that he intends to force the National Government to "defend Democracy," thus unwittingly adopting the Communist Party tactic that was so "successful" in the Abyssinian affair.

On the other hand, the problem of the organised British Working Class, whose representatives met at Edinburgh to listen to the resolutions drawn up by the Labour Lieutenants of Capitalism was no less complex. How to express its fundamental needs in a bureaucratised, block-vote dominated Conference, has been long a standing problem with the British Labour Party. And how to *do something* about the plight of our comrades in Spain, with the apparatus of the party in the hands of the enemy, was an equally burning problem. Add to that the complete lack of leadership among the left-wing workers, who must look to the woolly-minded Cripps for a castrated expression of their views, and whose revolt took the form of fighting for the affiliation of a Communist Party that is busily engaged in selling out to British Imperialism for the sake of a possible British-Soviet alliance against Germany.

It was inevitable then, that the Conference should develop along lines of a blind, unorganised, headless revolt on the part of the rank-and-file to the open and shameless capitulatory policy of Bevin, Morrison & Co. Hugh Dalton on the last day of the Conference "on behalf of the Executive Committee, said that all of them were deeply troubled at the apparent divergencies which had showed themselves, and they all deeply deplored the disharmony which existed." (*Forward*, 17/10/36). Dalton and his crew were actually surprised that workers do not think along the same lines as those who call themselves the workers' leaders!

We are prepared to admit that the task of the Executive was not easy. While keeping one ear cocked on Margate, to learn what the Conservative Conference thought they should do, they waited hopefully for Stanley Baldwin to put his pipe aside and give it to them straight

from the horse's mouth. But Stanley was reluctant even to appear at the Conservative Conference, deputising Neville Chamberlain for that particular job. He could afford to ignore Edinburgh, confident that he had greater support there than at Margate, that his supporters of 1914-18 and 1926 would not forsake him at this late hour. So the Labour Executive Committee was compelled to muddle through as best it could.

It pushed through Spanish Non-Intervention. It came out for Re-armament. It sand-bagged the Communist Party's humble bowed head. It kicked the Co-operative Party in the face. It rapped the knuckles of some extremists who ventured to protest about British Imperialism in Palestine. Morrison made unctuous speeches on "Democracy," meaning that Labour Councillors are not to be bound by Party discipline or pledges. It skipped through such trifling problems as Unemployment, Distressed Areas, Malnutrition in a single sitting. It steam-rolled the League of Youth that had been showing signs of life. It smeared all talk of United Front in the same fashion. Then, just to demonstrate that the hand had lost no cunning when it comes to making meaningless "Left" gestures when the occasion arises, faced with a revolting Conference, it "reversed" its policy on Spain, by recognising what everybody knew weeks before and at the same time consigned the fate of Madrid to the tender mercies of the Non-Intervention Committee.

Against this imposing string of victories for the Executive with its block-vote wielded by Ernest Bevin, there was nevertheless a consistent opposition of approximately 500,000. On some issues, notably the League of Youth, it fell lower. On most issues it was higher.

A further development of considerable importance was the growing revolt on the part of the Constituency parties. Two informal meetings were held. At the first, held at the beginning of the Conference, only a few delegates attended. At the second some days later, a large majority of the Constituency Labour Party delegates were on hand to express themselves bitterly on the working of the steam-roller. This was probably the most significant development of the Conference. Properly led, such an opposition can become a dominant force in the development of the British revolution. Disgusted and disillusioned with the Party bureaucracy, the revolting Constituency Parties are now easy prey for the Communist Party with its revolutionary heritage and its demagoguery. But at present, their spokesman is Sir Stafford Cripps, who can be relied upon to fight their battles on any issue that is not fundamental.

For the revolutionary, there is every reason for encouragement in the results of the Edinburgh Conference. It has shown an opposition of 500,000 that was able to express itself despite a strangling party apparatus. It has shown the Constituency Labour Parties stirring in revolt. The great task before us is to develop that opposition, to establish contact with the left elements in every local Labour Party. We must redouble our efforts, strengthen our forces in the Labour Party immediately. Now, as the fatal lessons of the treacherous Stalinist and Reformist policies are being made clear in Spain, as the first rumblings of the coming French Revolution are sounding, we must draw the lessons and give the revolutionary answer to their questions, and show them the only road out—the road of Marx, of Lenin, of Trotsky.

Thus we can help to form the British Section of the Fourth International in time to meet the final Capitalist Onslaught. That is our task!

Towards the New Workers' Party

Statement to the National Administrative Council of Independent Labour Party

From the Members of the Former Marxist Group

TWO years ago a group of Trotskyists joined the Independent Labour Party, stating openly their wish to convert the I.L.P. to their own political principles. During our first year, the political struggle was directed mainly against the Stalinists in the party who were striving to accomplish a fusion between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party. For many years the Trotskyists had warned the international working class of the steady degeneration of the Comintern. The I.L.P. leadership, incapable of seeing this, formed a United Front with the Communist Party. It was only in August 1935 when the Stalinists openly betrayed the revolution, adopted a League of Nations policy, and urged the class collaboration of the Popular Front, that the N.A.C. partially recognised the road along which it was leading the party. It was the open betrayal of the Comintern and not the foresight of the I.L.P. leadership which brought this useless and dangerous United Front to an end.

The Trotskyists, organised as the Marxist Group, took an active part in party work and fought for the participation by every I.L.P. member in the Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies, for the policy of supporting the Labour Party (with the necessary criticism) in all elections where the I.L.P. was not running a candidate, etc. To these and other basic revolutionary tactics, the I.L.P. leadership offered a confused, varying but nevertheless on the whole very real obstruction. But there is no doubt that the I.L.P., though declining in membership, moved steadily towards the left, a development in which the Marxist Group played a major part. Then in the middle of 1935 came the Abyssinian question.

Party policy unmistakably demanded the support of colonial peoples against imperialism by independent working class action. The *New Leader* took that line with the enthusiastic approval of the party as a whole. The London Bureau, the international organisation to which the I.L.P. is affiliated, unanimously adopted a similar decision, which was subsequently endorsed by the N.A.C., also unanimously. But as the crisis developed, the Inner Executive, including McGovern, Campbell Stephen and Maxton, abruptly ordered that party policy should be neutrality between the Italian and Abyssinian dictators and forced a complete change of line. The party was thrown into confusion and disgraced at home and abroad. At the April Conference in 1936, the party reversed this reactionary decision but the parliamentary group stated that they could not carry out party policy "on account of their conscience" and threatened resignation if the matter were not submitted to a plebiscite. By falsifying the issues in the plebiscite papers the N.A.C. managed to win a narrow victory. But a grave blow was struck at both the prestige and morale of the party. For political ignorance and cynical dishonesty the whole episode is one of the most disgraceful in the history of the I.L.P.

Recent events have shown that behaviour of the leadership on the Abyssinian question is no isolated action but

marks definitely its determination to control the party in the interests of the parliamentary group and not of the Socialist revolution. When the Stalinists started their agitation for a Popular Front with the sole purpose of forming a body of opinion in England to struggle for an alliance with the U.S.S.R., the *New Leader* took the correct position of opposing this collaboration of workers with Liberal capitalists bound to end in the deception and confusion of the workers. But James Maxton has come out in the *News Chronicle* for the Popular Front, Jennie Lee openly supports the Popular Front. Brockway writes against it. Once again the party creates confusion instead of giving a clear lead. It is possible that for the moment the party leadership may declare against the Popular Front but should the development of events give any popularity to this dangerous slogan we have no doubt that the parliamentarians if they think it useful to them will drag the party into the Popular Front as brazenly as they decreed neutrality on the Abyssinian question.

Equal vacillation and shuffling are shown on the international field. The Marxist Group stands for the principles of the Fourth International, under which slogan are comprised the revolutionary strategy and tactics of our present period, which include a ruthless condemnation of the policies of the Comintern and the ruling group in the U.S.S.R. We have proved that the various crimes and mistakes of the Comintern can be traced directly to the growth in the U.S.S.R. of a caste of bureaucrats who use the Comintern merely for the purposes of their internal and external policy to which the struggle of the workers for socialism is strictly subordinated. We have repeatedly pointed out to the party and to the N.A.C. the increase of bureaucratic exploitation and the relentless persecution of revolutionary socialists in the U.S.S.R. The N.A.C. has consistently dodged this vital question. The recent trial and execution in Moscow of revolutionary socialists, unmistakable sign of the degeneration and nationalistic conservatism of the Soviet bureaucracy, have made this question one of urgent importance for all workers. If the Soviet bureaucracy persecute revolutionaries at home, it is because they view with fear the revolution abroad. The N.A.C. has in its possession the statement of Adler, secretary of the Second International, which proves the trial to be a clumsy frame-up. Yet despite this and other impartial evidence it refuses to take a position and can only talk vaguely about its "disquiet." It avoids a clear decision because it fears to be labelled "Trotskyist."

Condemning the Second International and the Third at the April Conference, the N.A.C. came out for a "new" International, which however it carefully distinguished from the Trotskyist Fourth. It urged the party to support the London Bureau, a hypocritical and pretentious organisation of so vague and spineless a character that the I.L.P. continues to play a leading part in it, despite its flagrant violation of the Bureau's policy on Abyssinia. The Bureau has recently held a conference at Brussels and once more the I.L.P. leadership shows its unstable

and treacherous character. At this conference Brockway, the Secretary of the I.L.P., dropped the slogan of the "new" International and seeks to form an International which shall be "truly revolutionary." By avoiding the term "new," he evades the explicit condemnation of the Comintern and thus opens the way for further confusing and delaying negotiations with that shamelessly counter-revolutionary organisation which has just voted for the war credits in France and recommends to the workers of Britain that if there is an alliance between Britain and the U.S.S.R. against Fascist Germany, the workers must fight with their capitalists in the war "until the main Fascist aggressor is defeated."

Even where the I.L.P. works hard to support the Spanish revolution in typical fashion it disguises the weakness and mistakes of the P.O.U.M., the Spanish Party of the London Bureau,* and refuses to enlighten the British workers on the criminal and treacherous role of the Stalinist bureaucracy which to-day is as frightened of revolution in Europe as any capitalist class; makes the Comintern both in and out of Spain fight not for a Workers' Spain but for Spanish democracy, and gives belated assistance to the Spanish workers only on condition that the revolution is kept within the bounds of bourgeois democracy.

This sorry record makes it clear that despite its revolutionary phraseology the I.L.P. leadership, taken as a whole, is no more than a body of political manoeuvrers without vision or principle, incapable of helping the party

* It is a revolutionary duty to the international working class movement, as well as to the Spanish comrades, to indicate firmly our disagreement with P.O.U.M. on many aspects of their policy, e.g. entering the Catalonian Government. Yet P.O.U.M. have issued many correct slogans, and, in opposition to Spanish Socialists and Stalinists, alone in Spain are advocating the socialist revolution. And revolutionaries should and must give P.O.U.M. support with criticism, or, to use the correct Marxist term, critical support.—Editorial Committee.

and the workers to see the major political developments of the day, floundering into vague resolutions only when it is impossible any longer to evade a decision, and ready to break these for the sake of any trifling parliamentary advantage or internal or external party intrigue. It relies on parliamentary prestige and on the pacifists and reformists who came out of the Labour Party with them in 1932. In order to stifle exposure of their ignorance of Marxism, and to crush opposition to their revolutionary disloyalty, these leaders made the Marxist Group an illegal organisation in April 1936, shamelessly exploiting as always the sentiment of party loyalty. There is not the slightest reason to expect any change in them and revolutionaries in the party have to face the fact that at the great crises which are bound to confront the workers in the near future, the I.L.P. leadership will unscrupulously use all its resources to keep the party a docile instrument for its own petty activity. Under such leaders there is no hope for the I.L.P. and the party has shown neither the will nor the courage to drive them out.

The national and international situation steadily worsens. No party in Britain gives a clear, comprehensive and resolute lead. Yet without the revolutionary party there can be no hope of success for the workers in Britain, without the revolutionary international no hope for the workers of the world. We therefore withdraw from the I.L.P. and call upon revolutionaries inside and outside the party to join us or collaborate with us in laying the foundation of a revolutionary party which will lead the workers to conquer fascism; will defend the U.S.S.R. by their independent action, the only possible way; abolish imperialist war and ensure the victory of socialism.

FOR THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY PARTY!
FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

For the Marxist Group,

Secretary: ARTHUR A. BALLARD.
Chairman: C. L. R. JAMES.

Inaugural Meeting

of the Marxist Group (Trotskyists)

★ ★

FOR THE NEW REVOLUTIONARY PARTY —

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER, 16TH, AT 7.30 P.M.

at MEMORIAL HALL, FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4

Open Letter to Winston Churchill

ON OCTOBER 16th, there appeared an article in the *Evening Standard* by Winston Churchill, which closely concerned us, and we sent off the letter which we print below both to the Editor and to Winston Churchill. We have received no replies. We give below important extracts from Churchill's article as well as our letter.

It is significant that the only notice that the *Daily Worker* (October 17th) took of this article was to reprint the statement that the Trotskyists in France receive pay from the Nazi Government. Even Churchill while making that statement hedged by saying he found it difficult to believe such reports.

Here are some extracts from Churchill's article:

A remarkable dualism, amounting to a veritable schism, has grown up in Moscow. For ten years it has been mainly confined to the higher organisation of the Soviet Republic. Put shortly, it is the quarrel between Stalin and Trotsky. Stalin has now come to represent Russian nationalism in a Communist form. Trotsky stands for the orthodox theory of international world revolution.

Stalin has acquired Lenin's authority. Trotsky, banished, hunted, a world-pariah, has Lenin's message. . . .

It follows from all this that a very noticeable division has broken out among the Communists in all the different countries outside Russia. Those who are paid by Moscow, or are still under the Moscow spell, conceive as their first duty the furtherance of Russian foreign policy and the maintenance of Russian national safety. The orthodox doctrinaires in whom resides the pure venom of the Leninic word regard these tendencies with fury and disgust. There is thus a rift throughout the whole Communist underworld. There is serious trouble in the reptile house. The crocodiles and the snakes have fallen out. We must endeavour to bear this painful spectacle with phlegm. . . .

These antagonistic forces now manifest themselves remarkably in France. There, the official Communists, Moscow pattern, Stalin brand, present themselves as active, competent agents for the strength of France.

They are the declared supporters of M. Blum. They do their best to make things as easy as possible for him. They not only vote all the credits for defence; they urge that even more intense efforts should be made. They do nothing to hamper the preparation of the French army, and would to-morrow support and smooth out its mobilisation in the face of a Nazi menace.

Communist conscripts present themselves with the utmost punctuality at the depots, and in many cases prove model soldiers. Communist agitators use their influence against serious interruption in the production of munitions of all kinds in the factories.

I am not at the moment commenting on these facts. I am merely stating them. The perverted intelligences of these sectaries make them willing, though Frenchmen,

to fight not for France, but for Russia, or to fight for France only if Russia will fight for Russia.

On the other hand, the Trotskyites, now almost entirely cut off from the Moscow finance, are emerging as a separate force. Even in the Spanish welter we discern their appearance as the P.O.U.M., a sect achieving the quintessence of fetidity, and surpassing all others in hate.

The so-called Communist disturbances in France are mainly attributable to the Trotskyite section. It is credibly and openly stated in France that the finance on which the Trotskyites depend comes not from Moscow, but from Berlin. I find it difficult to believe myself that the Nazi Government, while volunteering to lead a world crusade against Communism, should at the same moment be fostering its most subversive form. But the point ought to be discussed in public and cleared up one way or the other. Such then, is the strange scene so far as the normal eye can comprehend it. It would certainly explain the recent farcical trial and well-staged executions of the Communist Old Guard in Moscow. The demonstration was intended for the Communists abroad. It was meant to be a signal proof that the Russian Government was master in its own house and would have not truck with the Trotskyite schismatics.

October 16th, 1936.

Mr. Winston Churchill:

Sir,

Ordinarily, revolutionaries do not take much notice of the statements made about their character by bourgeois, especially big bourgeois. But your article in the *Evening Standard* of October 16th demands some statement from us. It is a sign of the times that the possessing classes of which you are such a distinguished mouthpiece, have at last realised that Trotsky's long struggle against Stalin and the Stalinist regime was based not upon disappointment at loss of power, but on the principles of proletarian revolution as outlined by Marx and Engels, developed by Lenin and flagrantly betrayed by Stalin. The open realisation of this fact by yourself is of enormous importance, not because of its effect upon the bourgeoisie but because the ruling thought of any age being the thought of the ruling classes, what the bourgeoisie think to-day the large masses of the people will be thinking to-morrow. And history is moving so rapidly at the present time that we, the Bolshevik-Leninists, welcome your statement as evidence of the early recognition by the British masses of our political position. Your article betrays that you are uncomfortably aware of that fact. Your references to the Stalinists show your sympathy with their new turn to nationalism, collective security, love of the nation and all the bourgeois shibboleths. But in fear of the proletarian revolution, represented by the Trotskyists, you exaggerate their present force (as you most certainly underestimate the influence they will wield in the upheavals which will face mankind before very long). That the "so-called Communist disturbances in France are mainly attributable to the Trotskyite section is flattering but untrue. The million and a half who went into the factories and stayed there until some paper satisfaction was given to their

demands did not take action on account of the Trotskyists but on account of the bankruptcy of the capitalist régime in France. They realised that they could only hope for a decent standard of living for themselves and their families by holding the bourgeoisie by the throat. That magnificent action by the French masses was checked and betrayed by the Stalinists of whose counter-revolutionary activities you try in vain to disguise your approval. The Trotskyists have been blamed by bourgeois and Stalinists alike for trying to drive the movement forward. The P.O.U.M. in Spain are not Trotskyists, although they are a party who have many Trotskyists in their ranks, and have at least gone far enough from Stalinism to recognise its treacherous nature. But if you give us credit for things which we have not yet accomplished we would like to assure you that we fight for the opportunity to carry out our aims, which can be stated simply: the struggle against imperialist war by the relentless struggle to turn it into civil war; the relief of the Russian proletariat oppressed by the Stalinist bureaucracy owing to our failure between 1917 and to-day, the overthrow of capitalism by the proletarian revolution, and the foundation of the international socialist order. The rise of Trotskyism in recent months which obviously causes you so much disquiet and leads you to exaggerate our actual achievements is proof of the strength of our principles. For Trotskyism, that is to say, the theory and practice of Marxism in our period, draws its strength not from the "crocodiles" and the "snakes" as you so elegantly describe us, but from the economic disorder of modern society, from the lusts and cruelty of the ruling class, its incapacity to solve its problems except by Fascism and the periodical destruction of millions of men. You and your class cannot solve the problems of capitalist society and you will perish.

How and when incidental circumstances and the will of men will decide. Trotskyists merely try to hasten the process and ensure the victory of the working-class with the least loss. But ultimately it is capitalism itself which breeds the proletarian revolution and the rise of Trotskyism to-day in the minds of a few, and to-morrow in the actions of the many, is the signal of the approaching battles. You have your side. We have ours. We are both preparing. But was it necessary to go so far as to accuse us of taking money from the Fascists in Berlin? It is "credibly" stated, you say, that our comrades in France are financed by Hitler. You find this difficult to believe but only because Hitler might not find it politic to give the money. It does not seem to have crossed your mind that we would not take it. You state however, "But the point ought to be discussed in public and cleared up one way or the other." Is that merely a gentlemanly gesture to cover the slander or is it that you really wish to discuss the matter and to clear it up? We know the bourgeois too well to have any illusions as to the depths to which it will sink in order to discredit all who threaten bourgeois property. But honest workers might read you and listen to what you have to say about us and this concerns us. You say that the matter ought to be discussed in public. So do we. Choose your time and place. We are at your disposal. Take this offer or we shall expect that in common decency you make a public withdrawal of this vile accusation or brand yourself as a cowardly slanderer who takes advantage of the publicity open to him to discredit political opponents whom he dare not meet in open argument.

Yours, etc.

ROBERT WILLIAMS,

*For the Editorial Committee of "Fight,"
Organ of the British Bolshevik-Leninists.*

SPAIN: INTERNATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

THE civil war in Spain is no longer a national class war. Spain has become an international arena where the two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, are fighting a battle which may determine the whole future of Europe for a decade to come. As we write comes the news that 20,000 Germans, reputed to be officers and men of the Reichswehr, have landed in Spain. Italian Fascists pilot Italian planes which drop bombs on Spanish towns. O'Duffy also has taken Fascist Blueshirts from Ireland to help the insurgents, who are being pushed back and on the way to being defeated by the workers. On the government side, Russians now man Russian tanks, and in the International Column, which is creating a name for itself by its fighting, socialists of many nationalities have taken up arms for the cause of their class. The steps which Eden wishes to take against volunteers are directed against that magnificent column. At the same time, with that cynicism which capitalism breeds, the military advisors of the various countries watch the war machinery in action, measure the destruction of human life as tests for new types of planes and tanks of their governments, report on their efficiency for the coming imperialist war.

But it is not the fact that there are various nationalities fighting in Spain which makes it an international battlefield. It is the other way round. Because the outcome of the civil war affects so many European countries, the various nations are represented there. Revolutionaries have always called for international solidarity among the working class: have always taught that the working class has no country. They have done this not from any sentimental standpoint, but because in the present stage of development of the modern world, political events in any one country have their effect and repercussions in all others. The victory or defeat of the workers in any one country is a victory or defeat for the workers of the whole world.

If Franco wins through the help of interventionists and the working class of Europe suffers a defeat, a new imperialist war becomes a certainty and so much nearer. The successful revolutionary uprising of any working class in any other country becomes so much more difficult and is probably pushed into the background until some time during the next war. But if the working class wins, as it seems to have a good chance of doing at the moment,

and a workers' government and not a democratic government is set up, this will be the motive power pushing forward the development of the revolutionary situations that already exist in France and to a lesser degree in Belgium. From there how far the revolutionary fire would spread it is difficult to prophecy, but with capitalism overthrown in a number of countries, the great catastrophe to civilisation of a new world war might be finally averted.

The prestige as well as the interests of Germany and Italy are now involved and they will give all the support they can to helping Franco establish a dictatorship from Madrid. But the chances for the workers have lately become very much better, and they have achieved some success against Franco. We have to remember, however, that although it is the workers who are fighting and dying, the Spanish government is still a Liberal bourgeois government. From the very beginning it has been ready to compromise and come to terms with Franco. If Franco were defeated outside Madrid, it is likely that the government would attempt a compromise "to save further bloodshed," and it would have behind it in this move, the support of the British, the French and the Soviet governments. There is a very real possibility, that these three governments may "intervene in the interests of peace." Stalin, as well as Baldwin and Blum, are more frightened of a Soviet Spain than a Fascist Spain. Their policy is to attempt to get a "democratic" government re-established. At the same time there is no doubt that with Franco beaten, the morale of the workers and peasants throughout Spain would rise high, and they would bitterly oppose such treachery. But such opposition has to be directed and there is no party in Spain to-day ready to push forward the workers to seize power. Another "left" bourgeois government could not in fact do any more for the workers than the last, which refused even such reforms as the dole to the unemployed. In the end such a government could serve no more than as a period of truce, to the disadvantage and disillusionment of the workers and to the advantage of the forces of reaction. In the course of a year or two if not before, it would lead inevitably to a renewed stage of the civil war, more fierce, more bitter, more ghastly than the present.

Tragically, there is no revolutionary leadership, no Bolshevik party as in Russia in 1917, to crystallise and give organisation form to the real desires and imperative needs of the workers and peasants. All the working class parties

to a lesser or a greater degree are misleading their followers. The Anarchists do not believe in leadership nor in any forms of organisation other than conspiratorial or terrorist, and the Syndicalists only in the industrial field and even then not in any centralised organisation such as advocated by Lenin and Trotsky. The pressure of events has, nevertheless, forced both Anarchists and Syndicalists to abandon their basic conceptions to some extent and to unite and organise. The P.O.U.M. (the Workers' Party for Marxist Unity) in whose ranks are many Trotskyists, in the early days of the civil war in particular, put forward some correct slogans: "For Soviet Power," "Land for the Peasants," and if such a term were defensible could be said to have adopted a nearly correct revolutionary position, only in revolutionary science it is not possible to be nearly correct. Now the P.O.U.M. is veering towards the right. Nin, one of its leaders, has entered the Catalonian government of which Companys, a bourgeois, is still a member, and which is attempting that first step of all reaction, the disarming of the workers in the towns, under the pretext that all available arms are needed at the Front. Despite the fact that in Catalonia some form of Soviets is in existence, and the workers are in control of industry and transport and the militia, the Communist Party still ties the workers to the capitalist Liberals in the Popular Front, still calls upon them to die for bourgeois democracy and outside Spain collects funds for the Spanish workers in their fight for democracy, denying that they have any "extremist" ends in view.

Until quite recently the Soviet Union with France, its ally, and Britain, whom it hopes to make its ally, imposed sanctions upon the workers of Spain, and kept arms from them when it was obviously its first duty to supply them. In the past weeks it has started to send volunteers and arms, and this help has undoubtedly been of major importance in the defence of Madrid. But it gives this help not to the revolutionary workers struggling for power but to the Liberal bourgeois government.

The present danger for the Spanish workers is intervention. Against the armed intervention of Italy and Germany on the side of Franco, the workers everywhere must support their Spanish comrades with money, munitions and men. The British workers must also be on guard against the "peaceful" intervention of Britain and France. The Spanish battlefield is the greatest present battlefield in the class struggle, and the only victory for the workers is the victory of international socialism.

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THE COMING FRENCH REVOLUTION

ON February 6th, 1934, the French Fascists made a demonstration in Paris similar to that of Mosley in the East End a few Sundays ago, but of a much more serious and determined kind. They intended to upset the Government. There was something like a pitched battle between the Fascists, who were well armed and the police. A Radical (Liberal) government was in power at the time. So frightened was it by this attack on parliamentary democracy, that it gave up office promptly to a reactionary government of the Right, which could "deal with the situation." This marked the opening of the Fascist counter-revolution in France, which aims at destroying all the workers' organisations and enforcing class-collaboration by means of terror over the workers.

But in June 1936 a Popular Front Government took office and the French working classes, by their now famous stay-in strikes, compelled the Popular Front Government to agree at once (on paper) to meet of the essential demands for improved working class conditions. This was the opening of the workers' revolution.

The programme of the French Popular Front undertook to do two things.

1. Improve the workers' conditions.
2. To bring back prosperity to French capitalism (expressly stated).

The Bolshevik-Leninists in France and elsewhere pointed out at once that these two promises really cancel each other out. It was no great effort of thought to predict precisely that Blum would be forced to take back with one hand from the workers what he gave with the other; in simple terms that French employers would compel Blum to let them get back from the workers in increased prices (profits) whatever they lost to the workers in increased wages. That if, further, the French workers refused to put up with this and resorted once more to the stay-in strikes, Blum would be forced to declare such strikes illegal and to use the police to eject the strikers.

These Trotskyist predictions were of the most simple and elementary kind. Yet they were received with a chorus of abuse from the Socialist and Communist leaders in France. Why? Because the Socialist and Communist leaders had a definite interest in deluding the workers as to the magical powers of a Lib-Lab Government.

The test came a few weeks ago. In the textile strike dispute at Lille, Blum found himself between two final arguments. The workers demanded certain rights of organisation and a real increase of wages over the increase of prices. The employers stated that any further nonsense about workers' demands would end simply enough in employers' bankruptcy. This is perfectly true. It is precisely because capitalism now, cannot be reformed to give better workers' conditions without at once making capitalism bankrupt, that the workers' revolution is necessary to lift humanity on to a new and higher level of production. Blum only extricated himself out of this position by whittling away the workers' demands and by warning the employers of a possible civil war if they did not concede something. Blum however insisted that the workers should promise not to use the stay-in strike any more. The French T.U.C. agreed to this.

But not all the rank and file workers were prepared to give up this vital weapon. Consequently on October 7th, in Paris, the workers of a chocolate factory were ejected from the factory by the police. "The strikers refused an arbitral award . . . so the employees called in the police. The main gate of the factory was locked, but a police lorry charged it and broke through. The strikers were ejected after a hand-to-hand fight in the Yard." (*The Times*, October 9th).

Treachery leads to treachery. The question of Spain demanded a decision in the international sphere. Even the Stalinists, one would imagine, were taken aback at the action of 'their' Popular Front Government in France towards the Popular Front Government in Spain. It is certain that non-intervention turned the scale badly against the workers in the Spanish civil war. A victory of Spanish Fascism would give the most desperate impulse to French Fascism. And what will 'democracy' do about a French civil war? Blum will sit in a non-intervention committee while Hitler, Mussolini, and *Franco* dole out the aeroplanes to de La Rocque and Doriot, the French Fascists.

Why does Blum continue his non-intervention rigmarole in face of obvious Fascist betrayal? Because Blum is really only a link in a vicious circle of weaknesses. Blum argues that he has to do it, because he cannot otherwise get the support of the British Government. Stalin argues that he must support Blum, his military ally.

Where can this vicious circle be broken? The British government, Blum, Stalin, or the world working-class? Only in one place—the world working-class! They alone can do what no capitalist democratic government can be "forced" to do. They can carry the armaments they have made with their own hands across to their comrades in Spain, if they have the revolutionary will to do it. And this is precisely what the Trotskyists stand for.

The Stalinists call themselves the leaders of the French workers. They declared against Blum's non-intervention policy (under pressure from the workers) but only in words and they would not vote against Blum over this—in order not to break up the Popular Front. But their vote-catching intrigues have a further treacherous significance. Blum's actions in ejecting strikers by force, in continuing the non-intervention scheme, represent a shift to the Right in France—a move towards Fascism. To cover Blum with Stalinist support is to make it more difficult for the workers to see the truth of the position. "The Communists mean the Russian Revolution, and they wouldn't uphold a working-class traitor," is the way the French worker still thinks. Woe betide him if he thinks that too long, for he will be lost. Really, in his own mind, the French worker wants direct action. Soviets of strike deputies, workers' control of the factories, workers' organisation of lorries and trains carrying guns and armaments across into Spain, arms which the workers themselves have made in the French factories. These are the things therefore which the small Trotskyist party in France, the International Workers' Party (P.O.I.) demands in its press and at its meetings.

Ivor Montagu and the Moscow Trial

IN THE *Left Book News* for October 1936 there appears an article entitled "The U.S.S.R. month by month; the Trial" by Ivor Montagu, which merits our attention as containing in a summarised form most of the "arguments" put forward by the apologists of Stalinism in explanation of that bloody frame-up—the Moscow Trial. Without attempting to follow Mr. Montagu point by point (since this would involve going over ground already covered in the last issue of FIGHT) we wish to deal here with a number of current Stalinist lies and misstatements upon which he has based his case.

Zinoviev and Kamenev and the October uprising. We Bolshevik-Leninists are far from defending the "strike-breaking" activities of Zinoviev and Kamenev in October 1917. In fact it may interest Mr. Montagu to know that it was comrade Trotsky who raised the question of these same "strike-breaking" activities in 1924. (See "The Lessons of October 1917," English edition 1925). It is further worthy of note that Zinoviev and Kamenev were at that time in close alliance with Stalin against Trotsky. In the discussion which followed this attack by Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were most warmly defended by Stalin who pointed out that although Zinoviev and Kamenev had opposed insurrection in October 1917 and voted against it on the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, nevertheless the political bureau elected by the Central Committee to lead the insurrection contained both Zinoviev and Kamenev. And the reason for this was, says Stalin (in 1925!) because "these comrades were old Bolsheviks who stood on the general foundation of Bolshevism. . . . No split took place and the differences of opinion only lasted a few days, and that because Comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev were Leninists, were Bolsheviks." Mr. Montagu and our readers also may find these very interesting facts (including the quotation) on pages 208-209 of "The Errors of Trotskyism, a Symposium," published by the Communist Party of Great Britain in May 1925. Let us now make a quotation from Mr. Montagu himself. "Have Zinoviev and Kamenev fallen so far? Is terrorism worse, and in what sense, than their publication of and self-dissociation from the plans for the October uprising?" Comment is hardly needed.

2) Let us assure Mr. Montagu that Trotsky does *not* "to-day write of the Soviet Union in the Hearst Press." An article of Trotsky on the Soviet Union published in a workers' paper was pirated by the Hearst Press. Trotsky announced this publicly.

3) Trotsky and the Bolshevik-Leninists do *not* "feel the same degree of hatred of the U.S.S.R." as the Fascists. We have repeatedly urged the necessity for the defence of the U.S.S.R. against Fascism. (e.g. The editorial in the last issue of FIGHT). The fact that the Fascists are able to point to the existence of a bureaucracy in the Soviet Union in their attacks on it, is hardly to be blamed upon the Bolshevik-Leninists, thousands of whom have been exiled, imprisoned and executed in the Soviet Union for fighting to destroy the power and privileges of that same bureaucracy (while hundreds more of our comrades have suffered the same penalties for fighting Fascism in

Germany). And, speaking of unity with the Fascists, what does Mr. Montagu think of the joint campaign for the expulsion of Trotsky from Norway, carried on by the Norwegian C.P. and the Norwegian Fascist Party?

4) Trotsky and the Bolshevik-Leninists consider that the Soviet Union is a workers' state in as much as the basic means of production remain socialised. It is a workers' state, however, in which *political* power lies in the hands of a huge bureaucracy which, owing to the specific conditions of Russia (backwardness, delay in world revolution, etc.) has raised itself on the backs of the workers. This bureaucracy (which numbers many millions) cannot be overthrown by the assassination of Stalin any more than German Fascism can be brought to the ground by the assassination of Hitler. It can only be removed by the class action of the Russian workers aided by that of the workers in other countries.

5) Mr. Montagu refers to Mrachkovsky, Dreitzer and Smirnov as "Trotskyists." He even makes Smirnov "the actual organiser and leader of the underground Trotskyists in the U.S.S.R." He further adds: "These are not men, who in the history of their struggles with the party, have—like the Zinovievists—repeatedly 'confessed.' They are stubborn, silent, hostile figures." Mr. Montagu here shows a certain ignorance of the struggles in the C.P.S.U. In 1929 Mrachkovsky, Dreitzer and Smirnov publicly broke off relations with the Russian Bolshevik-Leninists and "confessed" their mistakes. Since that time they had no relations with our movement either inside or outside Russia. The same applies to Ter-Vaganyan and Dreitzer. It is necessary, however, for the Stalinists to call these men "Trotskyists" in order to disguise one fact which destroys their whole case against Trotsky—the fact that among the 16 prisoners at the Moscow Trial there was not a single Trotskyist.

6) So far as the "youngsters" are concerned we have an even clearer situation. Olberg was for a short time a member of the German Left Opposition. While a member he aroused the mistrust of his comrades, who suspected him of being a Stalinist spy, and was for this reason unsuccessful in an attempt to become Trotsky's secretary. In 1931 he was expelled from the German Left Opposition and subsequently had no contact with our organisation. The past of N. L. Lurie is absolutely unknown to us. Berman-Yurin, M. I. Lurie (Emel) and David were all members of the German Communist Party in which they held responsible paid positions. After the coming to power of Hitler they held equally responsible paid positions in the Soviet Union. Not one of them was ever a member of the Left Opposition. On the contrary, David and Lurie distinguished themselves by their attacks on "counter-revolutionary Trotskyism" (Mr. Montagu may find an especially vile attack upon Trotsky by Lurie (Emel) in *Inprecor* of December 1932). In view of these facts and of their behaviour at the trial we are justified in considering these men to be *agent-provocateurs* provided by the GPU.

7) But what of the "confessions" of the others, the old Bolsheviks? Here we are dealing with men who

had been demoralised and broken by years of mental and physical torture. Men who had not only had to stand by and see the principles for which the October Revolution had been won trampled in the dust by the bureaucracy, but had actually been forced by that bureaucracy to give public support to its actions. In and out of prison, in and out of exile, these men had nothing to look forward to except the gradual sweeping away of all that the Russian proletariat had conquered in years of struggle, while they, its former leaders, looked on powerless, conscious that through their past compromises and mistakes they had contributed to the triumph of the bureaucracy and had now lost the power to resist it. Who can tell what means the GPU employed to extort "confessions" from such men? One thing is certain. *There were other old Bolsheviks from whom no confessions could be extorted and who, for that reason, were not produced at the trial, though on the evidence they should have been.* Zinoviev, Kamenev and 17 others were tried for complicity in the murder of Kirov in January 1935, and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Only four of these appeared at the recent Moscow Trial—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bakaiev and Yevdokimov. None of the others appeared even as witnesses, though two of these, Gertik and Kuklin,

were considered in January 1935 to be among the main leaders of the Zinovievists and are repeatedly mentioned as leading terrorists during the recent trial!

We would therefore put to Mr. Montagu (and to Stalinists generally) two questions:

(a) Why were these men not present either as witnesses or accused at the recent Moscow Trial?

(b) Why were there no Trotskyists among the accused?

We would suggest that the only possible answer to both these questions is ; *because the GPU, with all the resources at its disposal, has not found it possible to extort "confessions" from these comrades.*

CORRECTION.

We regret that in the text of the October "FIGHT" Supplement on "The Moscow Trial" a printing error occurred. Page 2, col. 2, line 4 should have read "the capitalist state DOES NOT lean only on ministers," instead of "the capitalist state leans."

The Colonial Question

LENIN ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BACKWARD PEOPLES

Speech at the Second Congress in 1920

NO question is so important for the British worker and yet so remote from him as what is broadly known as the Colonial Question. Colonies are of many kinds, India, Palestine and Africa. Many British workers, for instance, sincerely believe that British rule is good for the millions of "backward" Africans. Though there may be injustices, he is told, yet the system helps the African to a higher standard of civilization. The Fourth International merely continues and develops the work of the Third International, distorted and broken after the Fourth Congress in 1922 and the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy and the death of Lenin in 1924. Lenin had a profoundly original conception of the development of backward people. We reprint here a part of his speech on this subject to the Second Congress in 1920. There is no need to comment on it at present. In succeeding issues we shall analyse the situation in various African states, and in the light of Lenin's proposals, recent developments and the political experience gained since Lenin's day, clarify our theoretical position and follow what must always result from theoretical clarification, a concrete programme of action. Before the members of the revolutionary party can help to solve the colonial problem—and Franco's success

in Morocco shows how near it is to us—we must exactly understand what the colonial problem is. The African will free himself and is ready to do so. But the British worker can help and must for only by so doing can he free himself.

"Another remark I wish to make concerns the question of the peasant Soviets. The practical work of the Russian Communists in the colonies formerly belonging to the Tsar, in such backward countries as Turkestan and others, has put us face to face with the question of how Communist principles, tactics, and policy are to be applied to pre-capitalist relations. For the most important feature of these countries is that pre-capitalist relations still prevail there, and that therefore there can be no question of a purely proletarian movement. There is almost no industrial proletariat there. Nevertheless we assumed and were compelled to assume the role of leaders. Our work there has shown that there are enormous difficulties to be overcome, but the result of our practical activity has likewise shown that it is possible, in spite of these difficulties, to awaken independent political thought and activity even in those countries where there is almost no proletariat. This activity has been for us harder than

it would have been for other advanced countries, because the Russian proletariat has been overburdened with problems of State. It is self-evident that peasants in a semi-feudal dependent state are able to conceive the idea of Soviet organization and also to act upon this idea. It is clear that the masses in these countries are being exploited not only by commercial capital, but also by the feudal relations of the State, and that this weapon, this form of organisation, can be applied to these relations. The idea is a simple one, and can be applied not only to proletarian conditions but also to feudal and semi-feudal peasant relationships. Our experience in this field has not been very great, but the discussions in the Committee, where many representatives of the colonial countries were present, have proved to us quite definitely and absolutely that we must base the Revolution of the Communist International on the assumption that the peasant soviets, the soviets of the exploited, are applicable not only to capitalist countries, but can be adapted also to pre-capitalist conditions, and that it is the absolute duty of the Communists and of those who are ready to organise the Communist parties to propagate the idea of peasant soviets and of soviets of the exploited everywhere, including the backward and colonial countries, and to make the attempt, wherever conditions permit, to create peasant soviets or soviets of the labouring people. This opens to us a very interesting and important field of activity. The experience is not large as yet, but we shall accumulate more and more material, and there can be no doubt of the fact that the proletariat of the advanced countries must help and can help the backward toiling masses. There is no doubt that when the victorious proletarian Soviet Republics will lend a helping hand to these masses, the

development of the backward countries will pass out of its present stage.

The question was whether it is correct to assume that the development of capitalist economy is inevitable in those backward countries which are now liberating themselves, and in which progressive movements have been started since the war; and we came to the conclusion that it is not inevitable and that when the victorious revolutionary proletariat will carry on a systematic propaganda and the Soviet governments will assist with all the means at their disposal, then it is incorrect to assume that the capitalist stage is unavoidable for those nations. Not only must we form independent nuclei of party organisations, not only must we proceed at once to propagate the idea of peasant soviets and to adapt these soviets to pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International must declare on theoretical grounds that with the assistance of the proletariat of the advanced countries the backward nations can arrive to the Soviet form of organisation and through certain stages pass on to Communism, obviating the capitalist stage. It is impossible to indicate beforehand the means to be used for that purpose; practical experience will show the way, but it is firmly established that all working masses, including those of the remotest nationalities, are susceptible to the Soviet idea, and that these Soviet organisations must be adapted to pre-capitalist relationships, and that the work of the Communist Parties all over the world must start at once in this direction."

* * *

(Next Month: "Kenya." An article dealing with this colony in the light of the above.)

Documents of the International No. 2

The Fourth International and the USSR

The New Constitution — A Stage in the Degeneration of the Workers' State

1. The decision of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern announcing that Socialism has "finally and irrevocably" conquered in the U.S.S.R. despite the low level of the productivity of labour in comparison with the most advanced capitalist countries, and regardless of the course of development of the whole of the rest of mankind, is a crude and dangerous lie. The reference to the fact that the U.S.S.R. embraces "one-sixth of the earth's territory" is all the less decisive since there lives on this territory but 8.5% of mankind. As before, it is a question of the struggle between two irreconcilable systems—Socialism and Capitalism. This struggle is not solved and cannot be solved within the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. The question can be solved "finally and irrevocably on the world arena."

2. The basic mass of the means of production of the U.S.S.R. has grown to a marked degree and is concentrated

in the hands of the collective farms which stand midway between individual and State property. But even State property is not yet *Socialist property*, for the latter presupposes the dying away of the State as the guardian of property, the lessening of inequality and the gradual dissolution of the very conception of property in the habits and customs of society. The actual development of the U.S.S.R. of recent years has been going in a diametrically opposite direction; inequality is growing, and together with it State coercion. From the present State ownership it is possible, under favourable internal and international conditions, to go towards Socialism, but it is also possible, under unfavourable conditions, to go back towards Capitalism.

3. Every workers' state will at first, in the interests of increasing productivity, preserve the system of wage payment, or, as Marx put it, "the bourgeois norms of

distribution." The question is decided, however, by the general direction of development. With the drawing-in of the most advanced countries into the revolution, and a rapid growth of social wealth, inequality would soon disappear and the State would have nothing more to "protect." With the isolation and backwardness of a Soviet country the bourgeois norms of distribution have acquired a crude and offensive character (the gigantic differences in wages, the bonuses, the grades, the "Orders of Merit," etc.), and have given birth to restorationist tendencies which threaten the system of State property itself.

4. The low productivity of labour, together with the high capital expenditure, the immense military expenditure, and the threatening rapacity of the uncontrolled officialdom, creates even now an extreme deficiency in the most important objects of personal consumptions for the masses of the population. The economic successes, too modest for a considerable material and cultural advance of the whole nation, are already completely sufficient for the formation of a broad privileged stratum. During the second Five Year Plan the social contradictions have not been softened but have become much more acute. *Inequality is growing with giant strides.* The hymns about a "happy life" are sung by the upper stratum while the lower strata are forced to watch in silence.

5. By playing on the many social antagonisms (the town and the village, mental and physical labour, individual and collective farms and the private property of collective farm members, the Stakhanovites and the remaining mass of the workers), the Soviet bureaucracy has attained, in actual fact, independence from the toilers. Like every other bureaucracy, it regulates the contradiction in the interests of those who are strongest, best secured, most privileged. Like every other bureaucracy, it exacts for this a considerable part of the national income for its own benefit, and becomes the most privileged of all the privileged strata.

7. There remains, however, a fact of decisive significance—the fact that all the social relationships of the U.S.S.R., including the privileges of the Soviet aristocracy, rest, in the final analysis, on State and collective farm ownership, which, as distinct from Capitalist ownership, opens up possibilities for the growth of the national economy and of culture. The historical abyss created by the October revolution, separates as before *Soviet planned State economy* from *Capitalist "Statism,"* which signifies State interference with the object of saving private property and which "regulates" an economic system which has outlived itself, by holding back the development of the productive forces and lowering the standard of life of the people. The identification of Soviet economy with Fascist economy (Italy, Germany), so common among Liberal economists, is the result of ignorance or charlatanism. The victory of the Bonapartist bureaucracy of the U.S.S.R. over the proletarian vanguard is as yet by no means identical with the victory of capitalist counter-revolution, although it opens up the way for it.

8. To maintain (like the anarchists and ultra-lefts of all kinds) that the U.S.S.R. demands from the revolutionary proletariat the same attitude towards itself as do the imperialist states, signifies the statement that it is a

matter of indifference to the working class whether State industry and collectivised agriculture are maintained and developed further in the U.S.S.R., or whether the national economy of the U.S.S.R. progresses under conditions of disintegration and through civil war towards Fascist Capitalism. Such an attitude towards this question is worthy of disillusioned idealistic "friends" of the U.S.S.R., i.e. dillettantes and political phrasemongers of the Liberal and anarchist types, but not of Marxist revolutionaries who never forget the *basic historical factor; the development of productive forces.*

9. The social differentiation of Soviet society is developing, as has been said, mainly in the sphere of distribution and only partially (mainly in agriculture) in the sphere of production. Distribution, however, is not separated from production by a stone wall. In evoking an orgy of private, group and individual appetites, the bureaucracy compromised the very idea of socialised ownership. The growth of economic privileges gives birth to legitimate doubts among the masses *as to in whose service, in the final analysis, the whole system will finally function.* "The bourgeois forms of distribution," which have long ago outgrown their legitimate limits, threaten, in the final analysis, to destroy the social discipline of planned economy and consequently also State and collective farm ownership.

10. The possible ways of a bourgeois restoration can be especially clearly seen with regard to the question of the family. Not having been able to solve the problems of social feeding and education, both as a result of the insufficient material and cultural level of the country and as a result of the stifling of the self-activity of the masses, the bureaucracy has busied itself with *the restoration and idealisation of the petty-bourgeois family,* with its closed economy, this basis of all forms of social idiotism. But the family poses with especial acuteness the question of the right of inheritance. The bureaucracy itself, striving to support itself politically upon the conservative family, feels its own rule to be incomplete without the possibility of bequeathing its material privileges to posterity. The question of the *right of inheritance* leads to the question of the further widening of the sphere of *private property.* Such is one of the possible channels of a bourgeois restoration. In all spheres of social life the bureaucracy attacks everything that is progressive in the Soviet system. From being the guardian of "Socialist ownership" it has become its subverter.

11. The political significance of the *New Constitution* of the USSR is directly opposite to its official interpretation. "The Constitution of Stalin" is not a step forward, "from Socialism to a Communist society" as the official authorities shamelessly maintain, but, on the contrary, a step backward, from a dictatorship of the proletariat to a pre-bourgeois political regime.

The development of a Socialist society would, in the political sphere, express itself through the dying-away of the State. The degree of this dying-away is the most reliable index of the successes of Socialist development. The beginning of the dying-away of the State must be the complete liquidation of the bureaucracy which has raised itself above society. In actual fact, the New Constitution legalises and strengthens a diametrically course of develop-

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ment. It could not be otherwise; the growth of privileges demands the gendarmes for their protection.

12. *State coercion* is not lessened by the New Constitution but, on the contrary, acquires an exceptionally concentrated open and cynical character. The Soviets are destroyed. The local and central "municipal" and "parliamentary" institutions, created on the basis of a plebiscite system, have nothing in common with Soviets as militant organisations of the toiling masses. At the same time, they are deprived beforehand of any real significance. The New Constitution, officially and openly, concentrates the power and control over all spheres of economic and cultural life in the hands of the Stalinist "Party," which is equally independent both of the people and of its own members, and which is a *political machine of the ruling caste*.

13. At the same time the Constitution legally liquidates the dominant position of the proletariat in the State, which was long ago liquidated in fact. The dictatorship is declared to be henceforth "non class" and "of the whole people" which, from the Marxist point of view, is nonsense; the Dictatorship of the "People" over itself would signify the dissolution of the State into Society, i.e. the death of the State. In actual fact, *the New Constitution strengthens the dictatorship of the privileged strata of Soviet society over the toiling masses* and thus makes impossible a peaceful dying-away of the State and opens up to the bureaucracy "legal" ways for economic counter-revolution. Namely the re-introduction of capitalism along the dry road*—without *coup d'état*—the possibility for which is being prepared by the bureaucracy precisely by its deception about the "victory" of Socialism. It is our task to summon the working-class to oppose the pressure of the bureaucracy by their own force for the defence of the great conquests of October.

14. Despite the official lie, the New Constitution not only does not widen Soviet "democracy," but, on the contrary, sanctions its complete stifling. Each of its paragraphs bear witness that the present masters of the situation will not voluntarily give up their positions to the people. The aristocratic and absolutist character of the New Constitution is shown most of all by the new crusade for "the annihilation of the enemies of the people, the Trotskyist reptiles and furies." ("Pravda," 5.6.36) which was announced on the day of its publication. The bureaucracy understands full well from whence a mortal danger threatens it and directs its Bonapartist terror against the representatives of the proletarian vanguard.

15. The working class of the USSR has been deprived of the last possibilities for a legal transformation of the State. *The struggle against the bureaucracy becomes of necessity a revolutionary struggle*. True to traditions of Marxism, the Fourth International inflexibly *rejects individual terror*, as it does all other methods of political adventurism. The bureaucracy can be overthrown only by a conscious movement of the masses against the usurpers, parasites and oppressors.

In the same way as a *social counter-revolution* would be necessary for the return of the USSR to capitalism, so a *political revolution* has become necessary for it to move forward to Socialism. Supporting itself upon the toiling masses of the country and the revolutionary movement of the whole world, the proletarian vanguard of the USSR will have to overthrow the bureaucracy by force, to regenerate Soviet democracy, liquidate the monstrous privi-

leges, and secure a real movement towards Socialist equality.

16. In questions of war, as in all other questions, the parties of the Fourth International are guided not by formal and idealist considerations and sympathies but by materialistic criteria. If they supported, for example, Abyssinia, despite the maintenance there of slavery and a barbarous political regime, it was, first, because for a pro-capitalist country an independent national state is a progressive historical stage; secondly, because the defeat of Italy would have meant the beginning of the destruction of the capitalist regime which has outlived itself.

The world proletarian vanguard will support the U.S.S.R. in war despite the parasitic bureaucracy and the uncrowned Negus in the Kremlin, because the social regime of the U.S.S.R., with all its distortions and rottennesses, is a tremendous historical step forward in comparison with rotting capitalism. The defeat of an imperialist country in a new war will lead to the destruction not only of its state form but also of its capitalist basis, and consequently to the replacement of private ownership by State ownership. The defeat of the Soviet Union would signify not only the destruction of the Soviet bureaucracy but also the replacement of State and collective farm ownership by capitalist chaos. The choice of a political line is automatically dictated under these conditions.

17. The fear of the "ultra-lefts" that a victory of the U.S.S.R. can lead to a further strengthening of the position of the Bonapartist bureaucracy flows from a false understanding of the international relationship and the internal development of the U.S.S.R. The imperialists of all camps will not be reconciled with the U.S.S.R. so long as private ownership of the means of production has not been restored. Whatever the grouping of states may be at the beginning of the war, the imperialists will always be able to agree amongst themselves and to re-group themselves at the expense of the U.S.S.R. during the war. *The U.S.S.R. can come out of a war without a defeat only upon condition that a revolution comes to its aid, either in the West or in the East*. But the international revolution, the only salvation for the U.S.S.R., will be at the same time a mortal blow for the Soviet bureaucracy.

18. *Is the U.S.S.R. a workers' state?* The U.S.S.R. is a state which is supported upon the property relations created by a proletarian revolution and ruled by a labour bureaucracy in the interests of the new privileged strata. The Soviet Union can be called a workers' state in approximately the same way—despite the tremendous quantitative differences—as a trade union ruled and betrayed by opportunists, i.e. the agents of Capital, can be called a workers' organisation. In the same way as revolutionaries defend every trade union, even the most reformist, from the class enemies, carrying on at the same time an irreconcilable struggle against the treacherous leaders, so the parties of the Fourth International defend the U.S.S.R. from the blows of Imperialism without one moment ceasing to struggle against the reactionary Stalinist apparatus. In time of war, as in time of peace, they retain full freedom of criticism in relation to the ruling Soviet caste and full freedom of struggle against its dealings with the imperialists at the expense of the interests of the U.S.S.R. and of the international revolution.

8th July, 1936.

L. TROTSKY.

* Without the bloodshed of a counter-revolution.—Ed.

Doctrine and History for the Youth No. 1

POPULAR FRONTS IN PAST TIMES

THE basis of Marxism is the class-struggle. Many in the labour movement agree with that in words, but keep on thinking in political terms instead of looking through these and getting at the class realities that lie below. That is why revolutionary periods are so worthy of study. In them one sees the real interests of classes stripped of all the political drapery of quieter times. If we look at some great revolutionary periods of history we shall see some very clear lessons for us to-day. We shall not begin with the British and French Revolutions. They will be treated in separate studies. Let us take the first great socialist revolution in European history, the French Revolution of 1848. It was a socialist revolution in the sense that it was made by the workers organised in factories by capitalist production. Also they were aiming, though not clearly, at socialism, the conversion of bourgeois private property into socialist property. The revolutionary workers came out into the streets of Paris, overthrew the government and could have had the power if they knew how to. But the masses cannot seize power. They need a revolutionary party. The trouble in France was that there was no revolutionary party and the workers came under the leadership of Louis Blanc, a great believer in democracy, exactly the same type as Citrine, Attlee and Leon Blum. Louis Blanc at once tied the workers to the Liberals and made an attempt to solve the problems of the workers through a democratic parliament. Liberals and workers established a republic. But this only meant changing the political form, and leaving untouched the economic class grievances which are the main driving force of a workers revolution. A dangerous situation developed. The workers were ready for drastic action, but listened to Louis Blanc and his talk of parliamentary democracy.

Let Lenin tell us the inevitable result:

"For while in a society with a keen class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, particularly when this struggle is inevitably made more acute by a revolution, there can be no "middle" course, the whole essence of the class position and aspirations of the petty bourgeoisie consists in wanting the impossible, in aspiring towards the impossible, i.e., towards just a "middle course."

The third determining class force was the proletariat which aspired not towards a "conciliation" with the bourgeoisie but towards a victory over it, towards a fearless development of the revolution onward, and what is more, on an international scale.

This was the objective historical soil from which sprang Cavaignac. The vacillations of the petty bourgeoisie "pushed it aside" from active roles, and the French Cadet, General Cavaignac, taking advantage of the fear of the petty bourgeoisie to entrust itself to the proletariat, decided to disarm the workers, to shoot them down in large numbers.

The revolution was terminated by this historical shoot-

ing; the petty bourgeoisie, numerically preponderant, had been and remained the politically impotent tail of the bourgeoisie, and three years later France again saw the restoration of a particularly vile form of caesarist monarchy."

The military dictator, the "Fascist" of those days, did not come by accident but arose precisely because of the vacillations of the Government, which was a perfect example of the Popular Front.

Marx and Engels, having studied history closely, drew the conclusion: "the workers must have their own party which knows what it wants and will pull the petty bourgeoisie behind them in action, the petty-bourgeois masses, not the politicians." The workers were anxious for allies, "but," said Marx, "watch your ally as you would your enemy, march side by side with him but never join with him." Working on those lines, Lenin formed and led the Bolshevik party. In 1917 when then Russian workers and the peasants who formed the army, upset the Tsarist Government, the Bolshevik party was unorganised and too weak to seize power. The Democrats helped to form the workers' Soviets and then gave the power to a Liberal Government. Soon these representatives of the workers actually joined this Liberal Government. That was a Popular Front Government if ever there was one; with Liberals and most of the workers' "democratic" representatives, all except the revolutionary Bolsheviks. We know how this Kerensky Government failed. People blame Kerensky, but it is absurd to do so. A Government of that kind can never function in a crisis. Democracy is a political form. But in modern revolutionary crises it is property which is at stake. It was at this period that Lenin quoted the example of 1848 and warned that in a period of crisis a government must know its mind and act, or the great property-owners would do what they did in 1848—take advantage of the confusion and organise a military rebellion. A few months after the thing happened. Kornilov attacked, but the Bolsheviks were on the alert and, being outside of this Popular Front Kerensky Government, mobilised the masses under the banner of the socialist revolution and swept on to victory.

We can see a parallel situation in Spain to-day. In 1931 Workers and Liberals got rid of Alfonso and the Spanish Revolution began. But, once more, in a revolutionary period as the present time, a government of Liberals and Workers cannot function. In the inevitable confusion Franco got his chance. In France, the Radicals (Liberals) and Blum, the Labour leader, cannot function. They have been travelling opposite ways from the time they started and confusion grows daily. The rival claims of the workers and capitalists cannot be settled in the French Parliament, and it is in this uncertainty that the Fascists get their chance. The lessons of a hundred years of history are clear. The workers must unite in a Workers' Front and take workers' action under the leadership of a revolutionary party. The lower middle classes follow those who take action.

C. L. RUDDER.