

# THE FIRST THREE INTERNATIONALS

September, 1974

six classes

A six-class study guide based on the Pathfinder publication, The First Three Internationals, by George Novack, Dave Frankel, and Fred Feldman, \$2.45 paperback.

## Class 1. The Roots of Internationalism

Required Reading: "The First and Second Internationals," by George Novack, pp. 10-42

Supplementary Reading: "The Communist Manifesto," by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association" and "General Rules of the International Working Men's Association," in Karl Marx on the First International, Saul Padover, ed., McGraw Hill, New York, \$4.95; Karl Marx: The Story of His Life, by Franz Mehring, Ann Arbor Paperbacks, \$3.95

### Questions

1. Why was nationalism rather than internationalism the dominant trend in the bourgeois revolution? In what ways did this revolution have an internationalist character as well?

2. In what ways did the bourgeois national state represent an advance over precapitalist regimes? Why do the national states established by the bourgeoisie now constitute an obstacle to progress?

3. What are the material roots of working-class internationalism? Why is the working class the only class capable of establishing a truly international society?

4. The Statutes of the First International stated:

"That all efforts aiming at the great end (the emancipation of labor) have hitherto failed from want of solidarity between the manifold divisions of labor in each country, and from the absence of a fraternal bond of union between the working class of different countries;

"That the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries."

Does this concept still hold true? Why? How does it contrast with the views put forward by Stalin in dissolving the Third International? (See pp. 21-22 and 179-180 of The First Three Internationals.)

5. What developments in the class struggle spurred the formation of the First International?

What reasons made England the center of the first attempts to build such an international organization?

6. How was the internationalism of the International demonstrated in its attitude toward such issues as the American Civil War?

7. What was the attitude of the International toward the struggle for such reforms as the ten hour day and the extension of the suffrage?

8. Was the International a politically homogeneous organization built around scientific socialism? What other tendencies did the Marxists have to contend with in the First International?

10. Why did the defeat of the Paris Commune lead to the downfall of the First International? Why was Marx able to say in 1878, after the collapse of the First International, that the international workers movement was stronger than ever?

## Class 2. Rise and Decline of the Second International

Required Reading: "The First Two Internationals," by George Novack, pp. 43-66

Supplementary Reading: Reform or Revolution, by Rosa Luxemburg; Critique of the Gotha Programme, by Karl Marx

### Questions

1. What developments accounted for the shift of the center of working-class organization from England to Germany?

2. What were the main accomplishments of the Second International? Why is it sometimes called "the International of organization"? How did it compare with the First International in terms of size, power, and political homogeneity?

3. What material conditions permitted the growth of reformist tendencies in the International? What was the social base of reformism?

4. What were the positions of the revisionists around Edward Bernstein on dialectical materialism? The perspectives of capitalism? Reform vs. revolution? How were these arguments answered by the Marxist wing?

5. What were the arguments used by supporters of Millerand to justify entering bourgeois governments? Do we still hear such arguments today? What position did the International adopt on this?

6. How were the developing trends within the International reflected in debates over entering bourgeois governments? Over attitude toward the colonies? Over the stand to take on imperialist war?

7. What was the political significance of the

debate over "independence of the trade unions"? What is the revolutionary Marxist position on this?

8. In what ways did the 1905 revolution in Russia represent the high point of the Second International? What role did the Russian Social Democratic Party play in this upsurge?

Class 3. The Collapse of the Second International and the Building of the Third

Required Reading: "The First and Second Internationals," by George Novack, pp. 67-78; "The Evolution of the Comintern (1919-1936)," pp. 79-85

Supplementary Reading: "The Collapse of the Second International," by Lenin in Collected Works Volume 21 (Progress Publishers, 1964), pp. 205-259; "The (21) Conditions of Admission to the Communist International," in Degras (ed.), The Communist International, 1919-1943: Documents, Volume 1 (Frank Cass & Co., London, 1971); "The School of Revolutionary Strategy," by Leon Trotsky in The First Five Years of the Communist International, Volume 2, pp. 1-43, and other sections; International Communism in the Time of Lenin, Gruber (ed.), Vintage Press

Questions

1. What was wrong with the belief held by many leaders of the Social Democracy that the capitalists could be prevented from launching imperialist wars indefinitely by mass pressure short of revolution? How did this relate to differences within the Second International over the perspectives of capitalism?
2. What was the position on war adopted by the Second International at the Basel Congress? What did the Social Democratic parties do in practice when the war broke out? Why did the Leninists view this response as a definitive watershed in analyzing the character of the pro-war "socialist" parties?
3. What did Kautsky's statement, "The International is an instrument for peace and not for war" reveal about what had happened to the Second International?
4. What were the fundamental principles of Lenin's position on the war? What was his attitude toward the Second International?
5. What were the differences between the left and center wings of the socialist movement on the war? How were these reflected at the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Congresses? Why was the question of what attitude to take toward the pro-war "socialists" and the Second International as important to the left wing as the

attitude to the war itself? What role did the Zimmerwald and Kienthal Congresses play in the construction of the Third International?

6. How were the positions of the Left Wing tested and confirmed in the Russian Revolution?

7. What were the main principles established by the First Congress of the Communist International? What measures were taken to keep reformist elements out of the Third International? What was the Two-and-a-Half International, and why was it short-lived?

8. What were the main accomplishments of the Third World Congress of the Communist International? What lessons did it draw from the March 1921 attempt at an armed uprising in Germany?

Class 4. The Struggle of the Left Opposition: Rise of the Bureaucracy

Required Reading: "The History of the Left Opposition (1923-33)," by Dave Frankel, pp. 99-133

Supplementary Reading: The Platform of the Left Opposition, 1926 (New Park, London, \$2.45,) available from Pathfinder Press; Lenin's Fight Against Stalinism, by V. I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky (scheduled for publication by Pathfinder Press in November, 1974) Ten Years of the Left Opposition, by Max Shactman, Education for Socialists Bulletin, Towards a History of the Fourth International, Part V, pp. 3-15; "What Now," The Third International After Lenin, Pathfinder Press, pp. 231-307

Questions

1. What were some of the objective conditions that led to the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union? What happened to the Soviet working class in this period? What class pressures did the bureaucrats reflect?
2. What was the New Economic Policy? Did nationalized property relations remain predominant during this period? What were the contradictory effects of this policy?
3. How did the bureaucratic grouping around Stalin act to suppress party democracy during the initial period of the struggle? What was the origin of the temporary ban on factions in the Bolshevik Party? How was this ban used by the bureaucrats?
4. What was the role played by the Bolshevik Old Guard in this struggle?
5. Was the alliance of Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Stalin based on a common program? What was it based on? Why did such political methods speed the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party?
6. How did Lenin initiate a fight against Stalin on the national question? On Stalin's use of his

position to build up a bureaucratic machine? On the monopoly of foreign trade? On the need for planned industrialization?

7. Why did the Left Opposition advocate a program of planned industrialization and gradual collectivization for the Soviet Union? Why would such a policy have aided, rather than undermined, the alliance of workers and peasants? Why did the bureaucrats oppose this?

8. What was Bukharin's attitude to the Kulaks? Why couldn't the concessions he proposed satisfy the needs of the peasants? What was the logic of such concessions?

9. What was the Anglo-Soviet trade union alliance? Why was the Left Opposition opposed to this alliance? What results did it have?

10. What did Stalin's references to the "division among our enemies" as a main "ally" of the Soviet Union indicate about the evolution of his policy? Why was the theory of socialism in one country the most consistent expression of the outlook of the bureaucratic layer?

11. What was the significance of the defeat of the German workers in 1923? What were the causes of this defeat? How did the leadership of the Comintern react? Why did Trotsky oppose the removal of the German leaders, despite their failure?

#### Class 5. The Struggle of the Left Opposition: The Fight to Save the Communist International

Required Reading: "The History of the Left Opposition (1923-33)," by Dave Frankel, pp. 134-171; "Evolution of the Comintern (1919-36), pp. 86-98

Supplementary Reading: From "The Third International After Lenin, Sections 1 and 3 of "The Draft Program of the International -- A Criticism of Fundamentals"; From "The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany: Chapter 11, "The Only Road" Chapter 15, "The Tragedy of the German Proletariat: The German Workers Will Rise Again -- Stalinism Never!" and Part 6, "For a New International;" Ten Years: History and Principles of the Left Opposition," by Max Shactman, Education for Socialists bulletin Towards a History of the Fourth International, Part V, pp. 15-23

#### Questions

1. What were the Stalinist and Trotskyist policies in the Chinese Revolution? How did Stalin's policies contrast with those of Lenin and Trotsky in the October Revolution? How did Stalin cover up the defeat in China?

2. After the Left Oppositionists were expelled from the CPSU, and from other Communist Parties

why did they continue the effort to reform the Communist International? Why did the Left Opposition characterize the Communist Parties during this period as bureaucratic centrist?

3. What were the fundamental points of agreement that formed the basis of the International Left Opposition? Why didn't the Left Opposition seek to unite all opponents of Stalin against the regime in the USSR and the Comintern?

4. What national and international factors combined to produce a "left turn" in Stalin's policy in 1928?

5. What were the policies adopted by the Stalinists on industrialization and collectivization? How did these differ from the policies of the Left Opposition? What is the Trotskyist attitude toward forced collectivization of the peasantry?

6. What happened to the conditions of the Russian workers during the "left turn"? Did the "left turn" include advances toward workers democracy?

7. A layer of the Left Oppositionists saw the "left turn" as a crude but approximate adoption of the policies of the Left Opposition. Why were they wrong? Why did their capitulation represent "giving up the idea that a revolutionary leadership would be needed to lead in the construction of socialism"?

8. In what ways was the "left turn" in international policy only an ultraleft expression of the policy of "socialism in one country"? What did the private views of Stalinist leaders reveal about their actual attitudes toward the Comintern?

9. How were the policies of the Comintern applied in Germany? What was the policy of "social fascism"?

10. Why did Trotsky advocate a united front policy in Germany? Was this because he had confidence in the ability of the Social Democratic leaders to fight fascism? What were the goals of the united front policy?

11. Why did Trotsky declare the Third International dead and call for the formation of a Fourth International as a result of the German events? Was it correct to do this in the midst of the Comintern's "left turn"?

12. Was the defeat of the Left Opposition in the USSR and the Communist International inevitable? What were the accomplishments of the struggle of the Left Opposition?

#### Class 6. Disintegration and Continuity in World Stalinism

Required Reading: "Stalinism and Internationalism," by Fred Feldman, pp. 173-204

Supplementary Reading: *Marxism vs. Maoism*, by Tony Thomas, Pathfinder Press; *Why Guevara's Guerrilla Strategy Has No Future*, by Peter Camejo, Pathfinder Press

Questions

1. What was the "popular front"? What fundamental aspects of that policy have remained a part of Stalinist strategy to this day? How was it applied before World War II in Spain? France? In the post-World War II period? Chile? The United States? Portugal? What characteristics do all these "popular fronts" have in common?
2. Have there been any Stalinist "left turns" since the Third Period?
3. What factors have contributed to weakening the Stalinist monolith?
4. What do Maoism, Titoism, and pro-Moscow Stalinism have in common that justifies designating them as variants of Stalinism?
5. Why has Castroism been unable to create an alternative to Stalinism? What failings pre-

vented the New Left from doing so? What characteristics of Trotskyism have made it the only viable revolutionary opponent of Stalinism for fifty years, despite the small size of its organizations?

6. Why is Stalinism the most dangerous enemy of the world revolution in the working class movement?

7. In 1943, the Executive Committee of the Comintern dissolved the Comintern. It excused its move by reference to the "deep differences in the historical roads of development of each country" and "the differences in the degree of consciousness of the workers." How do these excuses stand up as arguments against internationalism? Do we still need a revolutionary international?

8. What contributions has each of the three previous Internationals made to the building of a revolutionary world movement, despite their eventual downfall?