

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE

FLIGHT

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
ORGAN OF THE MARXIST GROUP (TROTSKYISTS)

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EDITORIAL

LESSONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STRIKE WAVE

THE year 1937 sees a welcome revival in Britain of working class militancy, as expressed in the growing strike wave. This is an extension of the widespread international strike wave, and reflects the economic background of sharpening class conflicts.

The bourgeoisie "solved" the crisis of 1930-33 by savage attacks upon the working class. Wage and unemployment benefit cuts, increase in direct taxation, ruthless oppression and persecution, were the methods used, while "national need and unity for sacrifice" were the slogans. In the struggles that took place the workers were generally defeated, the ruling class being ably assisted by the policies and tactics of the Reformists and Stalinists. These defeats reached their culmination in Germany, where the capitalist class had to resort to Fascism to overcome their crisis. The terrible defeat of the German proletariat had a profound effect on the international struggle. Demoralisation, apathy, and adventurism (influence of the ultra left Comintern) swept through the working class ranks. The British workers under the influence and advice of their leaders accepted widespread wage cuts and worsening of conditions. The unemployed, isolated from their fellow workers, were utilised by the C.P.G.B. for hopeless "stunts," arising from that party's "social fascist" theory (N.U.W.M., Hunger Marches, wrecking Labour meetings, etc.), which

ended in complete failure. It is important to bear in mind in our future work the experience of this period. For success, unity in action of the employed and unemployed is essential.

As a consequence of these defeats, it became apparent that a further upward economic development would be necessary in order that the working class could regain confidence, build up their organisations and acquire strength for the future class conflicts.

The first indications of a revival of militant spirit was seen in the heroic stand of the Austrian workers in 1934 (betrayed by their Labour leaders), and in the fight of the Spanish workers, particularly the Asturian miners. Although they both suffered defeat, they maintained a magnificent struggle, and it was only with the full use of the military machine that the Austrian and Spanish reaction triumphed. It is worthy of note that in Austria the Social Democracy had full control and leadership of the working class movement. Thus the Austrian workers had "unity," but behind the banner of Reformism. This led them to disaster then, yet our "unity campaigners" have conveniently overlooked this historical experience, and hysterically call for unity within the Labour Party on a "challenging" reformist programme. Thus, by ignoring the question of the revolutionary party, and confusing the issue of the United Front, the C.P.G.B., I.L.P. and Soc.

League will, in the name of unity lead the British workers to the same or worse disaster.

The economic crisis overcome at the expense of the workers, trade revived and with it the shadow of future crises, either unprecedented slump or war. The bourgeoisie began to improve their national and imperialist war machines. Thus rearmament became the order of the day and produced an accentuation of trade improvement. Production, prices and profits rose, particularly in the leading Imperialist countries. The increase in employment, the rising cost of living, the harsh conditions of labour, created a strong pressure on the workers to go forward for advances and improvements. The varying specific circumstances of each country have influenced this development, either to advance or retard the struggle. Yet the general tendency is operating internationally and the repercussions of the successes and defeats of the workers abroad will assist or hinder the British struggle.

The Spanish workers began the new wave of strikes in 1935-6. Not completely beaten in 1934 and burning with hatred for their brutal oppressors, they conducted great struggles, accompanied by street fighting and peasants' revolts. These continued right through the Popular Front electoral victory, and reached their crescendo in the present clash with reaction. The experiences of Spain illustrate that the bourgeoisie is unable to complete its revolution in a democratic manner. With the existing treachery of the Stalinists, who assist to keep the bourgeoisie in power, it is necessary to make clear to the British workers the history of the Spanish struggles since 1931. This is a vital need, as it would appear that the Spanish workers on the "Government" side have now been crushed and their independent organs of struggle liquidated.

From Spain the upsurge swept to France, where in

June 1936 the Blum Government was confronted by an amazing mass stay-in-strike, which was the peak point in a developing wave of militancy (Toulon, Brest 1935). While often confused and badly organised the French workers wrested large concessions from French capitalism. The French reformists remain true to pattern, while making left speeches to conciliate the masses, they seek to serve their masters, i.e., the bourgeoisie. The main leadership, however, was and is in the hands of the Stalinists, who have taken up a thoroughly reactionary role. At their bidding the workers have given up the factories, abandoned the demand for Soviets, kept off the streets and support the Blum Government. This Popular Front Capitalist Government in co operation with the employers has offered the concessions gained by raising prices, intensification of exploitation, and legal manoeuvres. Now Blum calls for an industrial truce, a halt to all reforms, and with "communist" support strengthens the armed forces. Sporadic struggles are breaking out from time to time, and we are likely to see a revival of mass action leading to a revolutionary struggle between the workers and Fascism. The fate of the French revolution lies chiefly in the ability of P.O.I. (French Trotskyists) to lead the workers against Capitalism.

The repercussions of the French strikes were quickly seen in Belgium, where mass miners' stay-in-strikes were begun, but carefully stifled by the reformist leaders. Further there are rumours of unrest in Germany. Despite the iron terror the Government found it necessary to postpone the factory council elections, although they only allow Nazi nominees.

Some comment should be made here on the widespread use of the stay-in-strike. Mainly for use in the factories it presents an improved technique of struggle. It can effectively prevent strike breaking, to carry out which

WHAT WE STAND FOR.

7 Points of the Marxist Group.

1. *For a new Revolutionary Party.*
2. *Opposition to all who betray the October Revolution under the slogan of "Socialism in One Country." Recognition of the international, i.e. permanent character of the proletarian revolution.*
3. *Defence of the Soviet Union against Imperialism and against internal counter-revolution for the restoration of capitalism.*
4. *Against Imperialist War, support for colonial and oppressed peoples, against subjecting the revolutionary movement to support of League of Nations. Against all who advocate National Unity with the capitalist class. For independent working class action behind the Revolutionary Party to turn Imperialist War into civil war, and to abolish war by the overthrow of Capitalism.*
5. *To participate in the working class struggle for immediate demands. For united action with other sections of the working class movement on specific issues, maintaining organisational independence and right of criticism.*
6. *Recognition that the Second and Third Internationals are politically bankrupt and impossible of being reformed.*
7. *For international working class solidarity under the leadership of the Fourth International.*

the employers have to resort to the State machine, gives the workers useful educative experience in the understanding of "workers' control," and provides a powerful basis for the propaganda for factory soviets. Its chief disadvantages are that it may encourage illusions as to the efficacy of syndicalism, that it, unless consciously directed to the contrary, isolates sections of workers in the various enterprises, and tends to overshadow the need for political action. The "desperation" stay-in-strikes of the miners are not of such a progressive character. In general they are an abandonment of the workers' organisations as vehicles of struggles, and result in a rear-guard and defeatist "hunger strike." The correct tactic for the miners is the seizure of the mines, both below and above ground. This would present a class challenge to the employers instead of a test of "humanitarianism."

The next big strike wave has developed in the U.S.A. Here, amid all the social and political corruption of a highly developed Imperialism, with different races and stratas among the proletariat, the workers are noted for their extreme economic militancy and political backwardness. The struggle has taken the form of a fight for industrial unionism. With the present day large scale enterprises, and the rationalisation of production, the old craft unions are unable to represent adequately the workers' interests. There is a growing pressure for a better form of organisation, so that masses of workers in a particular factory can present a united front to the employers. The enrolling of workers on the principle of their readiness to fight for a common rate, instead of being engaged in a specific class of work, meets the need for an effective instrument for the struggle under modern capitalism. The change from the former type of Union to the new is taking place gradually in the factories and branch rooms. In Britain it appears to be taking the form of a struggle to convert the existing craft Trade Union Movement, by altered methods of recruitment and by the extension of the Shop Stewards Movement.

In America, however, the craft union organisation (the American Federation of Labour, President Mr. Green) was unable to meet the new conditions. Reactionary, corrupt, with a record of betrayal second to none, and used mainly to maintain a set of bureaucrats, it has consistently failed over the past few years to fulfil any progressive function. The upsurge of militancy which accompanied the revival of American trade has therefore been expressed in the struggle of the Committee for Industrial Unionism against the A. F. of L. Led by Mr. Lewis, this body has made a vigorous attack on the great industries (General Motors, Carnegie and Pittsburgh steel), and is preparing for further struggles in mining, engineering, and oil. The issue has been in general for recognition of the Committee and its affiliated unions to represent the workers. Its importance is that it organises the workers in units, based on the factory. The form of struggle has been mass "sit-down" strikes; thousands of workers have occupied the factories, and the usual brutal methods of repression have failed to break their spirit. Faced with the sabotage of the A. F. of L., use of State troops, tear gas, company thugs and all the other methods of "restoring industrial peace," so expressive of American Imperialism, the C.I.U. has won considerable partial victories. The strikes have spread to Canada (General Motors) and are likely to develop into a far-reaching clash of class forces.

Although the Committee for Industrial Unionism fulfils at this juncture a progressive role, it is certain that the existing leadership (Lewis & Co.), being typical Labour bureaucrats will, if successful, become the usual class collaborationists. However, the situation presents great opportunities for the militants to play the leading role in the struggle for Industrial Unionism. In this way they can strengthen the workers' fighting power now, while preparing a basis for the future revolutionary struggles of the factory committee, council or Soviet. The importance of American Imperialism in world politics renders the raising of the struggle in that country of vital concern to the international proletariat.

The reaction of the British workers to these growing struggles has been somewhat delayed. The privileged position of British Imperialism with its resultant corrupting influence on the workers, and the strong hold of the Trade Union bureaucracy have retarded concrete expressions of militancy. However, under the pressure of economic circumstances combined with instinctive reaction to the advances made abroad, the British Workers have begun to go forward against the employers on the industrial field.

In engineering, an industry closely associated with the Government's re-armament programme, thousands of workers have struck for higher wages and better conditions. Rolls Royce, Fairey Aviation, Thornycroft's, the Glasgow apprentices, Parnells, De Havillands and Beardmores, are examples of militancy among key workers.

In transport there has been the big Scottish, the Southern Counties and London busmen strikes. In mining, the protracted Harworth dispute. In addition to these major events there are numerous minor strikes occurring. Further there are indications that more widespread struggles will take place shortly. The miners are preparing for a national strike, while their leaders seek a compromise with the Harworth "Company Union" (Spencer), the railwaymen demand restoration of their 1931 cuts and further increases, and the general tendency among the organised workers is for improvement in wages and conditions. Within the Unions themselves there is a steady ferment on hundreds of minor issues. These reflect the struggle of the rank and file against the leadership for democratisation, the ending of class collaboration agreements, and for more effective industrial organisation. The basis for this is strengthening day by day. The rapid carrying forward of the re-armament plan with its consequent rise in the cost of living, the growing menace of "dilution," i.e., cheap semi- and unskilled labour, provides the driving force. Revolutionaries must keep a careful watch over the progress of the industrial struggle. It is possible that with the development of the international upsurge, a repetition of the 1926 position may present itself in Britain. The uneven development of the struggle, the political backwardness of the British workers, place great responsibilities upon the revolutionaries and militants. To take part in these fights, to play the leading role, to act as a Communist (in the Marxian sense) i.e., to utilise the moments of class conflicts in order to drive home anti-Capitalist and anti-War propaganda is our task.

The Labour Bureaucrats still carry out their line of policy and tactics, which has betrayed the workers so often. In France the Blum Government, in Britain the respectable "His Majesty's Opposition," refuse to aid the Spanish workers in order not to embarrass the National Government. The "racketeering" liberalism of Morrison, the attitude of

the Citrines, Bevins, etc. indicate that if Labour has learned anything from past defeats it is merely that to save their own skins, they prove their loyalty to their masters in advance. The so-called Left, now well in the toils of Stalinism, links everything with the Unity Campaign. Strikes against the ruling class are for "democracy and a happy life." *Inprecor*, May 8th, in an article dealing with the class struggle puts a typically reformist line and its lead is as follows:— "The Communist Party warns the Government that if it should attempt to operate the Emergency Powers Act and use violence against the London Transport Workers, it will do so at its own risk and will bear the responsibility for what may happen." It is a tragic fact that the political result of the workers' militancy will be to strengthen the hold of the C.P.G.B. over the British masses, unless the Marxists can wield decisive influence and take over the leadership of the struggles. Both the I.L.P. and the Socialist League (now dissolved) have lately succumbed to the "need for unity" propaganda. In all their writings and speeches, despite comparatively "advanced" articles in the *New Leader* and *Tribune*, the class content has to be modified to meet the reformist requirements of the Unity Campaign. Whatever sincerity many of its supporters may have, this infamous

agreement is destined to play a betraying role in the British Working Class Movement. The struggle in Britain cannot be correctly led, and at the same time linked with a demand for unity inside the Reformist Labour Party (behind the Labour Lieutenants of Capitalism), and with the defence of "peace and democracy" (British Imperialism).

Therefore it is the urgent duty of militants, Socialists and Revolutionaries to prepare for the sharpening wave of struggle.

By building up the factory committees, linking them with the appropriate Unions, by developing the Trades Councils as co-ordinating centres for localised action, by fighting ruthlessly against all forms of betrayal, class collaboration, opportunism, from the platform and inside the Labour Movement by relating the specific problems of the workers with the general fight against Capitalism, and by pointing the revolutionary way out, we can play our part here in the forthcoming conflicts.

For this historic task a new Party and International is required. The success of the British and World Revolution demands that we proceed with the utmost determination to the preparation of the cadres for the British section of the Fourth International.

AFTER THE LONDON BUS STRIKE

An Analysis

AT THE moment of writing 30,000 London Busmen have been on strike for over three weeks. Their demands (7½ hour day and easement of working conditions) need no elaboration or justification in this article. The fight reflects in general the struggle of the comparatively highly paid skilled workers against the increasing tempo of exploitation on the part of the Monopoly Capitalists, in this case the London Passenger Transport Board; and of course as such demands the active support of all militants.

What is of importance however, is that the course of events has thrown a useful light on the methods of the contestant forces.

At the beginning of April the T.G.W.U. handed in notice to terminate their agreement with the L.P.T.B. The strike, based on a demand for a new agreement incorporating the 7½ hour day, took place on May 1st. To most people it came as rather a surprise. As this journal has stated in many issues the Trade Union leaders, particularly those of the A.E.U. and T.G.W.U., have been running round the country stifling the workers' industrial activity, by declarations of "unofficial," and by heresy hunts against the militants. When the busmen of London actually struck, the T.G.W.U. E.C. were busy breaking the home counties bus strike. Yet in the case of London, despite the occasion of the Cup Final and the Coronation, Mr. Bevin appeared quite ready to give the men full power to act. To-day (25th May, 1937) with the Underground and Trams continuing at work, and acting as "strikebreakers" with quite surprising success, the reasons for the lack of opposition to strike action from all quarters appears more understandable.

To assist in such understanding we give here a brief review of the role played by the various parties to the conflict.

LONDON PASSENGER TRANSPORT BOARD

This gigantic £112 million combine, set up by Mr. Morrison and Lord Ashfield, was formed to create a great profit yielding monopoly of London Transport. Generally, though highly successful, it has three "handicaps" in its efforts to wring greater revenue from the workers. Firstly, its employees are organised, and have won embarrassing standards of wages and conditions. Further, the busmen in particular have a number of "irritating" rights. For instance, the Board would like to introduce trolley buses on a wide scale, because of lower wages and cheaper cost. Yet they are bound by agreement not to displace buses for this purpose. Secondly the enacting legislation for the L.P.T.B. set up various types of stocks, with different rates of interest. The "C" stock for example has the power to appoint a Receiver, if their interest does not amount to 5¼% this year. Thus within the Board itself it is likely that there are conflicting groups of financial interests fighting for power and the most lucrative stock, etc. Thirdly, the L.P.T.B. desires to raise fares, but requires an ideological justification to get over public opposition.

During the dispute the Board has pleaded financial difficulty, and states its readiness to participate in an inquiry on the issues. Apart from taking part in the Government inquiry and offering a few minor concessions, it has taken no steps to settle the dispute. Indeed, it appears quite content to let the trams and underground

carry overloads, save the busmen's wages, and break the strike.

THE GOVERNMENT

During the first days of the dispute an official inquiry was set up. After profound deliberations this body found that the busmen have grievances, the 7½ hour day claim was not proved, but there was need for a further inquiry. With this masterly effort the Government seems to have forgotten a transport strike in "the Empire's capital."

THE T.G.W.U. AND THE N.U.R.

As we have mentioned above the Executive of the T.G.W.U. was quite agreeable to the busmen's action. During the dispute Mr. Bevin gave typical "class-collaborationist" evidence before the inquiry Court, has consistently refused to call out the tram men, and now urges the busmen to accept the L.P.T.B.'s terms (minor concessions and an inquiry into the 7½ hour day). Although early in the strike the Trams and Tubes pressed for some action and later the Trams delegate conference, while not recommending strike action, pledged loyalty to any call from the E.C., despite great pressure from the busmen, Bevin & Co. seem determined to keep the trams in a strike breaking role. Similarly, the N.U.R. Executive holds back the Underground workers.

THE STRIKERS

The London busmen represent a revealing mixture of militancy, fighting ability, discipline, conservatism, and sectarianism. Up to this dispute they have suffered from overconfidence, in that they firmly believed in their own independent power to win a sectional fight. To this failing and to the failure of their leadership, the Rank and File Movement, can be ascribed much of the responsibility for any possible defeat. It should have been clear that the leadership cannot be trusted, that only an all London transport strike is effective, and that the full active support of the working class movement is essential in these days of close co-operation between Combines, the Government, and T.U. officials. Instead of cursing the more backward tram men for not coming out, careful prior arrangements should be made to ensure concerted action. Strikes, to be effective, must aim at a hold up of the employers' business. It is a striking commentary on the position that neither the L.P.T.B. nor the Government have made any effort to run the buses. One can admire the spirit of the men, and welcome militant action. Yet if the London transport workers are to maintain their standards, strikes must be won. A danger of any possible defeat is that when the tram men are attacked in their turn, the busmen may refuse to assist them. Thus the old policy of "divide and conquer" will succeed, splitting the working class craft against craft, and section against section.

THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT

formed in 1932 to provide a means of rallying the busmen against the Board, when their Union failed to do so, was successful at that juncture. However, like all Stalinist creations it has departed from its original intention. Although it was formed as a "Red Trade Union" in the ultra left period, it did fulfil a temporary but useful function. Since then it has wandered into the new C.P.G.B. "line." For instance in the Abyssinian dispute, Mr. Papworth wrote words of fire to the effect that British busmen must be prepared to don khaki to fight

for Abyssinia. With the abandonment of the class struggle by the C.P.G.B. its line in industrial disputes becomes "left" reformist. Despite the presence in the Rank and File Movement of many good militants, its line in this strike has been a substantiation of our case. Its slogan was "the Busmen demand the right to live a little longer," and its activity has been to concentrate on the justification of the men's grievances. While this is necessary to win working class sympathy, a class appeal is the more essential. The Rank and File Movement has members in the Trams and Underground, yet little in the direction of co-ordinated fraction work appears to have been done. If the London transport workers wish to develop their Movement as a driving force to link up all sections in one industrial front, they must break free from the present reactionary shackles of the C.P.G.B. domination.

From the above brief analysis certain conclusions should now develop:

1. That the L.P.T.B. wish to utilise the issue to obtain a re arrangement of stock rights, and to get justification for raising fares. If the contemplated Inquiry recommends such a step in order to give the busmen their 7½ hour day, they will take the blame in the public eyes.
2. The Board and the T.G.W.U. leadership intend to break the busmen. The latter's independence, strength and "unofficial" actions constitute a menace to both their peaceful existences. The present tactic of leaving the Busmen out, while utilising the Tube, Tram, and Trolley bus workers as strikebreakers is calculated to force the strikers back, weaken their morale, and leave them bitter towards the other sections. If a Trade Union leadership is not able to declare a strike unofficial, they give it their "blessing" and work so that it will smash itself. This is a feature of Trade Unionism under modern Capitalism. Particularly is it applicable to the present period of re-armament, when the Ruling Class is opposed to any industrial disturbance.
3. In view of the above fact and of the reactionary role of the Rank and File Movement, the busmen must immediately take vigorous action themselves to bring out the other London Transport workers. Deputations and demonstrations to Tram depots must be arranged and visits to appropriate T.U. branches made. Without a complete stoppage of transport the 7½ hour day cannot be won; at the most only a few more minor concessions, if the Board is allowed to continue its present leisurely strikebreaking.
4. Whatever the outcome of the dispute important lessons remain both for the strikers and for the workers generally.

Industrial Unionism, one organisation for one enterprise covering all workers, the need for drawing in the services of the entire working class movement (the co-operation of the Busmen with the local Trades Councils is a welcome sign in this dispute), the urgent task of democratising the Trade Unions, and the essential prerequisite of preparation on class lines for the growing industrial struggles. These questions demand examination and resultant action if the workers are to be successful.

The strike may be over, when this article appears and its main purpose will be analytical. The Marxist Group desires not merely that the 7½ hour day may be won, but to strengthen the movement generally in preparation for the conflicts ahead.

THE SPANISH STRUGGLE

Towards The Barcelona Conference

The following statement was prepared by the M.G. for presentation at the Barcelona Conference. This Conference, called by the POUM, aimed at co-ordinating the work of the parties, groups, etc., who supported its general political programme.

Unfortunately circumstances arose which made it necessary to cancel the Conference. Whether or not it will take place at a later date is problematical. The Stalinist-led counter revolutionary offensive which has developed great force during the last few weeks is likely to claim all the attention of our comrades in the POUM.

In the interests of political clarity, and in answer to the ill-informed critics who accuse the Marxist Group of having denounced POUM at the beginning of the Civil War, but now claiming POUM as our ideological allies, we publish the following document.

WE must more clearly than ever avoid the easy and pleasant illusion that under the hammer blows of the enemy, in a civil war, a centrist party will automatically throw over its centrist position and move towards a Marxist-Leninist one. The POUM has fought heroically as have the anarcho-sindicalists; they have not to be absolved therefore from Marxist criticism.

An analysis of POUM must take into consideration the weakness of the international revolutionary movement. Faced with a task which is without parallel in the class struggle they were thrown back upon their own resources. The London Bureau had nothing to offer but platitudes and confusion. By its identity with the heroic struggle of its Spanish section, it acquired a reflected lustre of revolutionary purpose. This meant a slight increase in its numerical strength. How did the British I.L.P. react to this unearned heritage? By entering into a united front agreement with the Stalinist counter-revolutionaries. By co-operating with the party which in Spain is prepared to annihilate POUM because it fights for the social revolution. The terms of the Unity Agreement are such that the I.L.P. cannot openly declare its support for POUM and denounce its Stalinist slanderers. It cannot openly tell the workers of Britain that arms are being withheld from the Spanish comrades, that Comintern diplomacy has also been able to suppress *La Batalla*—the POUM paper. Such is the international group to which POUM allies itself.

We must remember that as a party POUM is young and inexperienced and, like all such parties, the theoretical development of its cadres is a very uneven one. It is essentially left-centrist. Therefore, the historic test to be applied is the test of its *tendencies* since the struggle began. Is it moving towards revolutionary clarity? Is it making less major political errors than previously? Are its left slogans really being applied in action? The success of the Spanish revolution and its influence upon the world revolution depends almost entirely upon an answer

in the affirmative. In the circumstances of civil war the party is being forced to move either one way or another. It is in a state of flux. There are opposing tendencies. Its best cadres will quickly move to a revolutionary position. Its incorrigible centrist section, alarmed at the ever-increasing dangers which beset the party, will move rapidly into the camp of reformism and opportunism. We believe that the revolutionaries can carry the party, but they require "outside" help. They require the help of the disciplined revolutionary internationalists—the historic successors of the bankrupt Communist International—the Fourth International of Marxist-Leninists. This is the prime task of the Barcelona Conference—the creation of such an International.

Whilst we recognise the youth and inexperience of POUM as a party, we cannot withhold criticisms of the mistakes and vacillations of its leaders.

Comrade Nin said in 1931 (see "Mistakes of Maurin" by Nin in the *Militant*, August 8th and 15th, 1931)—that Maurin's contempt for the lessons of the Russian October was a dangerous tendency, but right through 1936 this inability to understand and utilise the lessons of October led the POUM to vacillate on almost every vital issue of the civil war, its vacillations inevitably landing it on the wrong path.

Confusion on such vital questions as "Workers' Power," "Socialisation and Collectivisation of Industry and Agriculture" and inability to understand their inter-relationship resulted in a number of false estimations. On the 15th November, 1936, the Party Agrarian Conference held in Barcelona decided that: "The redistribution and collectivisation of the land must be realised through the Trade Unions." The enlarged C.C. confirmed this on December 20th and called for the socialisation of the land. Yet the pre-requisites for successful socialisation of the land, i.e., workers' power and control in industry, were not established. The Generalité was in power, and in December POUM had to publish a warning on the "Dangers of Trade Union Control in Industry" ('Spanish Revolution,' Dec. 2nd). Here it was pointed out that, in fact, much of the workers' control was operated in a producers' co-operative and not a social fashion.

Unfortunately, the criticisms of the Marxists, directed against the ambiguities of the POUM position, particularly in connection with the slogan of the "Socialist-Democratic Revolution" was met by the POUM leaders with the cry "Sectarianism." It was just these ambiguities, however, which led the party right into the camp of Peoples' Frontism which it only left when drummed out.

Our stand against the mistakes of POUM is not made out of sectarian self-satisfaction, but out of a burning desire and will to serve the Spanish revolution; and to honour the gallantry of the POUM fighters by driving forward relentlessly with them for the world proletarian revolution.

As the present standard bearer of the world revolution, POUM has a duty, not only to the workers of Spain, but also to the workers of the world. It must openly submit

itself to serious criticism. Admitting its errors, not as a penance, but as a first step towards re-arming of the party. The international movement which supports POUM must also take itself to task. The practical support which POUM should have commanded has not been forthcoming. Money has been collected; food and clothing sent; resolutions passed, etc., but do we, who call ourselves revolutionaries, consider that this is sufficient? While the fighters of POUM have been giving their lives for *our* cause, while they grappled with theoretical problems that determined success or defeat, the international movement has made *gestures* of support. Have we penetrated into the workshops and factories with our propaganda for POUM? Can we honestly say that we have won mass support for the line of social revolution? Have we applied ourselves to the clarification of theory and strategy so necessary in the struggle? Have we stood on a common platform and defended POUM against the slanderers? Possibly some comrades have had a happier experience than the Marxist Group. Our offers of co-operation with the I.L.P. have been rebuffed. We are told that Trotskyism is "unpopular" and—Trotskyism is nothing other than Marx-Leninism. The I.L.P. would assist this Conference if it could inform us how it can defend adequately the Spanish revolution without becoming "unpopular." To the extent to which it conciliates the Stalinists, is afraid of prejudices, fails to carry on an ideological offensive against the Soviet Government and the C.I., to this extent it betrays the Spanish workers.

Thus, the I.L.P. turns its back on Marxism and prefers an unholy yet popular alliance with the Social-Chauvinist Communist Party of Great Britain.

This Conference has a meaning only if it thrashes out these problems and the problem of revolutionary unity cannot be solved with platitudes. History has given us one international revolutionary party, the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin and Trotsky. This party must live again in the world; it is the only party which can save the international proletariat from defeat. POUM is moving in this direction, but their steps are hampered by the dead-weight of error and confusion. The London Bureau can save itself from extinction only by going forward to this objective. How far it goes is the test of this Conference.

We raise the question of "Dual Power." Its importance cannot be over-estimated. An editorial in the *Socialist Appeal*, Dec. 1936, gives a valuable resumé of the rôle of the POUM leadership during the period of dual power in Catalonia. For instance, the following from the *Spanish Revolution*, Oct. 28, 1936, should be noted:—"It is evident from the short description of confused responsibility that the period of dual power, so essential in pre-revolutionary and early revolutionary phases, had outlived its usefulness, and was leading to confusion and needless duplication" ... !!! The exclamation marks are justified because the conclusion drawn by the POUM leaders was to liquidate the dual power by — what? Handing over the power to the new Council of the Generalité.

Where was the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets"? If POUM had understood the revolutionary significance of dual power in October last, the proletarian dictatorship may have been established in Spain today. POUM must start all over again, building that dual power, to the point

where it challenges the "official" State, must lead it against the official State and upon its ashes build the workers' and peasants' State.

The relationship between POUM and the Anarchists is another which is determined by the ability to give a political expression to the inherent revolutionary instinct of this mass organisation. "The CNT (Anarchist Trade Unions) indisputably embraces the most militant elements of the proletariat. Here the selection has gone on for a number of years. To strengthen the Confederation, to transform it into a genuine organisation of the masses, is the direct obligation of the revolutionary party. But at the same time we must have no illusions about the fate of Anarcho-Syndicalism as a doctrine and a revolutionary method. By the lack of a revolutionary program and an incomprehension of the rôle of the party, Anarcho-Syndicalism disarms the proletariat. The Anarchists 'deny' politics until it seizes them by the throat; then they prepare the ground for the politics of the class enemy." Nin correctly appraises their rôle in the *Spanish Bulletin*, 31st March 1937. He points to their dangerous tendency in entering the Barcelona and Valencia Governments. No mention of POUM's own tragic blunder in this respect is made. Here again, confusion over the significance of dual power and an incapacity to apply the Leninist United Front tactic led to comparative isolation and lack of influence. The natural antipathy of the Anarchists to the bureaucratic State machine should have been energetically fostered. Unity of action on this question would have put POUM at the head of the revolutionary mass movement.

Is it too late to win the leadership now? One very important question must be clarified before this is possible. The question of the "united" revolutionary army. POUM quotes Lenin on the Red Workers' Army: "... so to save the workers for ever from the oppression of the landlords and the capitalists and to prevent their return to power, the great Red Army of the workers must be created.

"It will be invincible if it has discipline in its work. The Workers and Peasants should demonstrate and shall demonstrate, that with a just sharing of work, discipline and consecration for the common good, they can organise a life without landlords, without Capitalists and against Capitalists; the discipline, the passionate readiness for work, the ability for sacrifice, the firm alliance of workers and peasants, that is what will save the workers for ever from the oppression of the landlords and capitalists."

Has the POUM merely to organise an army to prevent the "return of landlords and capitalists"? Most decidedly NOT! It must overthrow them first. Therefore the analogy does not hold good. Again it will be seen that such an army has its strength in the unity of interest between the workers and peasants. But POUM has severely strained this unity. Their failure to recognise that the socialisation of the land was dependent upon the socialisation of industry, which alone would have guaranteed a higher productivity and made possible its socialisation. POUM divorced the agrarian from the industrial revolution by struggling for the socialisation of the land and leaving the control of industry to the reactionary Republicans and Stalinists, who immediately proceeded to crush the struggle of the workers and restore Capitalism. POUM by co-operating with such Governments certainly proved it was not "sectarian"—it was on both sides at one and the same time! The united Revolutionary Army can be created only when this unity—the unity of interest

is restored, when slogans reflecting the firm alliance of the workers and peasants are put forward, when they refuse to recognise the authority of the official State and build the independent organs of power—the Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants. Such action must inevitably lead to a conflict between the revolutionary army and the “People’s” army. While the issue of “democracy” or Socialism is still unsettled, joint action against the Fascists is imperative. The analogy between the Spanish Workers Army and the Russian Red Army would then apply to the period before October, when they fought with Kerensky but not for him. POUM has the task of applying this tactic (Lenin’s) in the present situation. The joint struggle to defeat the Fascist forces must be accompanied by a preparatory struggle to lay the basis for the overthrow of the Central Governments and for the setting up of a Workers and Peasants Government.

THE INTERNATIONAL

The ambiguities and confusion of the POUM is but a reflection of the political pauperism of the London Bureau. They deny the necessity of forming a Fourth International *now*. “The time is not opportune, it must be historically created. Only in actual struggle can such a question be posed, etc.” This nonsense is clothed with Marxian phraseology and liberally spiced with the word ‘dialectics’ to give it a philosophic taste.

Knowing that a storm is coming sometime, our seven “left” (London Bureau) ostriches stick their heads in the sand and await the “historic” moment. Upon its arrival they lift up their heads only to be blinded by the whirlwind, and “we can see nothing!” they quack in unison. Precisely! That is what they do see, nothing. They do not deny the necessity of building, what *they* call revolutionary parties and of a national character prior to the open struggle, but a revolutionary International is another matter entirely. This is where they go wrong. There can be no such thing as a “national” proletarian revolutionary party. It presupposes a Revolutionary International. In fact a revolutionary international is nothing other than a revolutionary party with national *sections*.

Don’t they know that we live in the epoch of Imperialism? National boundaries are no more. Finance Capital oppresses and exploits the toilers on a world scale. Every struggle is a struggle against the international bourgeoisie. The Workers party must therefore be an international party, else its fighting power is negligible.

Unless the POUM and its companions in the London Bureau participate in the work already begun by the International Secretariat for the Fourth International and its sympathetic contacts, the work of building the Fourth International *now*, they can play no positive part in the overthrow of the world bourgeoisie.

Based on the theory and practice of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, the Fourth International differs entirely from the concept International held by the London Bureau. It is not a federation of national parties with their own programs, constitutions and rules, and loosely grouped together because they have a “somewhat common outlook.” It is an International which is characterised by its centralised leadership, its high theoretical level, its strict discipline and unwavering determination of purpose. “The platform of the Fourth International” has already been published and widely circulated. There is no need to reiterate its basic principles in this document.

The formation of such an International would rally the dispirited workers all over the world. It would turn retreat into advance and rearm the heroic strugglers who have been bound hand and foot and handed over to the enemy by the bankrupt Comintern. The impending world war makes this task even more urgent. Russia as the first Workers’ State must be saved from its own internal corrupters. The influence of Stalinism must be broken throughout the world. The International Court of Inquiry into allegations made against Comrade Trotsky will give us this opportunity. Stalin knows this and will not stop at murder to silence the voice he fears. We must guard against this and see that Comrade Trotsky resumes the position which his genius has earned him. The position of leadership in the struggle for international socialism.

This is the only road for Spain, the only road for the world.

THE BARCELONA RISING

The following is a statement submitted by the comrade of the Marxist Group who intended to place the above viewpoint before the conference if this had materialised. He was at the Spanish frontier when the fighting took place at Barcelona.

THE crisis in Barcelona on May 4th and 5th has had far-reaching effects on the Spanish situation, culminating in the formation of a new Central Government at Valencia without the inclusion of the CNT (Anarchists).

It was foreseen some time ago that the struggle between the opposing forces in Catalonia—those of the CNT, FAI and POUM who stood for a revolutionary Spain; and those forces of “democracy,” Left Republican, Socialist and Stalinist — would eventually develop into an open conflict. The question of a revolutionary army and the unified command—dealt with briefly in the article appearing in the last issue of *FIGHT*—was one of the most important questions around which the controversy

raged.

The Generality of Catalonia, which included representatives of the CNT was preparing to hand over the revolutionary militias of Catalonia to the central Government at Valencia to be placed under the control of a unified command. This would have abolished the present character of the workers army in Catalonia which is under the direct control of the workers organisations. The role of the Valencia Government has been one of sabotage of the fighting forces of Catalonia. Using the lack of activity on the Aragon Front—caused by its holding back of the necessary arms and supplies for the Catalan workers—it has sought to slander the fighters of the Anarchist and POUM Militias; stating that the cause of this passivity was the refusal of these revolutionary sections to abandon their slogan of “a revolutionary army of Catalonia” and to submit to the discipline and central control of the reformist Gov. at Valencia.

The issue was: that the POUM and CNT were prepared to act in collaboration with the "republican army" of Valencia in a unified *command* but opposed a unified *army* of the old republican type. They instead claimed the right to maintain an army of a revolutionary character under the control of their own organisations.

POUM consciously advocated this because in contra distinction to the Reformists and Stalinists it claimed that the struggle against Fascism and the struggle for the social revolution were inseparable. The following statement made in an interview with the recent religious delegation by Del Vayo shows quite clearly what the present perspective of the "democratic forces" is.

"Senor Del Vayo emphasised that the anti-fascist forces in Spain were united with an advanced progressive programme. After the war the New Spain would therefore be essentially democratic, and one of the guarantees that this would be the nature of the constitution was, that the Communist Party were firmly supporting the principle of parliamentary democracy." For the POUM and other revolutionary sections to have placed their forces under the direct control of this bunch of reformists would have meant the finish of the only force in Spain capable of carrying forward the struggle to the final conquest of power—i.e., the armed revolutionary proletariat.

In the early days of April there was a further crisis in the Gov. of the Generality caused by the conflict between the CNT and PSUC (Stalinists). The CNT wishing to push forward the demand for socialising of large agricultural estates, cleansing of the armed forces, etc., the Stalinists demanding that there should be no attempt to socialise the land, full authority for the Generality without outside interference. POUM adopted the view that the CNT should not allow any concessions. They visualised that a new government would be formed in Catalonia with a strengthening of the position of the CNT. They claimed that this solution would only be of a transitory character "because the basic problem in question is the problem of *power*." The policy of POUM was for a government composed of workers' parties and organisations which would "call a congress of delegates of workers and peasants unions and of soldiers from which would spring the workers and peasants government so badly needed in the present circumstances."

There was therefore no agreement between the two main forces, the CNT and the PSUC, participating in the previous government of the Generality. Yet, despite this, representatives of these organisations were named to serve in the new government by the Catalan President. So far as I have been able to discover, the CNT did not take over its positions. The government was therefore still-born.

In the meantime all the "democratic forces" had been continuing their campaign against the revolutionary sections. This culminated in the attempted occupation of the telephone exchange in Barcelona by the forces of the Generality. This was the beginning of an attempt to disarm the workers in the rear. The exchange was controlled by the Anarchists who refused to hand over their arms, they were attacked with machine-guns and a bloody battle ensued. Several towns in Catalonia were seized by the Anarchists and "Libertarian Communism" proclaimed. Although POUM was not responsible for the beginning of this struggle, seeing that the workers were fighting a defensive battle, it called on the workers to defend themselves against the attempt of the Generality

to disarm the revolutionaries in the rear, and crush what remained of the revolutionary force of the workers.

The Stalinists have reported that the action was that of armed gangs and that the workers in general were in opposition to the fight being waged by the Anarchists and POUM. The facts are that workers in Barcelona had complete control of the streets for two days. It was only possible for "order" to be restored when troops arrived from Valencia (so much for Catalan autonomy). This, coupled with the manifesto of the CNT FAI leadership helped to quell the protest of the rank and file. The manifesto contained the following, "We demand that all our members deposit their arms, range themselves under the Republican banner, and avoid the accumulation of incidents which might lead to a catastrophe."

It was the rank and file of the CNT-FAI, who during recent months have moved nearer to a Marxist position, that united during the crisis with the revolutionaries of POUM.

A further answer to the lies of the Stalinists is the fact that in a great number of areas the PSUC were attacked spontaneously by the workers. *La Battala* the central organ of the POUM circulated 100,000 copies in Barcelona during the days of the crisis. The papers of the left being the only ones issued during that period.

After "order" had been restored in Barcelona, meetings were held in Valencia, etc. by the Stalinists in which they demanded the liquidation of the POUM and the trial of the leadership. The main attack during the whole event has been against POUM because it is the only party in Spain which has consciously maintained that the issue is one of *Workers Power*. Three hundred members of POUM were I understand, arrested during the Barcelona event.

The Central Government has restored "order" in Barcelona, but how long this will last, nobody can tell. The Anarchists who are the largest organised section of the workers in Spain, have refused to participate in the new Central Government.

This decision in itself is significant because it confirms our view as to the development of the Anarchists referred to above. The Generality of Catalonia has agreed to subordinate the Eastern Army to the Central Government. In view of the fact that the Generality does not represent the mass of the Anarchists and the POUM, this decision is bound to precipitate further crises.

POUM has put forward the slogan of "Build committees for defence of the Revolution by a fighting alliance of CNT and POUM." The present and future development of the struggle in Spain rests with the POUM or the rise of a new revolutionary party.

POUM is now faced with the possibility of being suppressed by the Central Government, a forecast of this is that already Bob Smillie of the I.L.P. has been arrested. An additional enemy—Stalinism—is now prepared to sink to any depths in order to silence any voice which calls for the World Revolution.

However, the bankruptcy of the Government is proved by their inability to conduct an offensive against Franco. If they were unable to do this with support from the CNT, what hopes have they of conducting an effective campaign with dissension in the rear? The only leadership, which will be able to defeat Franco and capitalism in Spain is that of a revolutionary government, truly reflecting the revolutionary aspirations of the workers, soldiers and peasants in Spain. 18th May, 1937.

AN AIR RAID POLICY FOR THE WORKERS

What Should Be Done

WHAT should be the policy of socialists towards the question of defence against air raids? Up to the present a purely negative attitude has been commonly adopted. This has been to expose the futility of measures proposed by the government, and to boycott the government plans for aerial defence. On this basis, opposition to the government has developed.

So far so good. But unfortunately, this by no means exhausts the question. There still remains the fact that air raids can and are likely to devastate whole populations, spreading death, fire and disease over cities numbering millions of workers. Obviously, as the danger of air raids increases, the purely negative attitude of bare opposition to government defence becomes more and more inadequate. At the actual moment of an air raid, it becomes a mockery of commonsense. What workers will respect an organisation which has no alternative to offer in place of disaster due to the failure of government militarism?

We frequently hear the remark; "There is no protection against aerial attack." This is inaccurate. The correct formulation of the idea is: there is no *adequate* protection against aerial attack. But *some* protective measures are possible, and moreover highly desirable, for workers engaged in the preservation of their own lives during air raids. The crux of the matter is—who will ensure the full application of what protective measures are possible? Who will control the machinery of defence of the civilian population against air raids, and for what ends?

The government has announced *its* plans of air defence, and its intention of controlling the machinery of that defence. Britain being an imperialist nation, these plans of the government are obviously designed for imperialist ends. In war, as in peace, the banks and the great industrial monopolies determine the course of governmental policy. The air defence plans already put forward represent preparations of the government to maintain its position of leadership as one of the foremost capitalist countries of the world.

In modern war, more than ever before, *civilian defence is the complement of military attack*. The latter is impossible without the former. Hence support of the government plans for air defence, means assistance to the military strength of the nation—a capitalist nation, let it not be forgotten. We cannot, therefore, be socialists and at the same time give our support to the government in its efforts to carry out a scheme of civilian defence, for we would thereby be aiding the maintenance of British capitalism. What can we do?

In the first place, we can expose the inadequacy and *real purpose* of the government plans for air defence. We can go on to show that air raids and war in general are inseparable from capitalism. We can emphasise the fact that *peace and world socialism are indivisible*.

Secondly, we can point out the urgent need for the *fullest possible* measures of protection of the civil population against aerial attack. We can indicate the horrors attending air raids and the *necessity for knowledge on*

the part of all workers of what can be done to lessen destruction of life.

To the statement that no protection at all is possible, we may reply that in the Soviet Union the civil population is rightly preparing intensively for protection against air raids. We can enumerate also the various methods which *if applied*, will lessen human suffering and mortality; for example, the beneficial effect of the rapid application of paraffin or other organic solvent to skin which has been exposed to mustard gas; the beneficial effect of decontamination measures after general exposure to mustard gas; the use (and limitations) of gas masks; the proper construction of gas-proof shelters, etc. We should endeavour to convey to as many workers as possible what is known on these subjects, including information on the presence and properties of the various gases.

Since we can reach only a small fraction of the working class, we should recommend workers to study these matters for themselves, through any special classes being conducted, through buying pamphlets, through the public libraries.

We should also advise workers to organise, as far as possible, their own machinery for organised protection against air raids. Trade Union branches and Trades Councils especially, as well as Labour controlled Municipal Councils, are in a position to prepare the ground work for *working class* measures of self-protection, which would not be devoted to the interests of capitalist government. Whilst it will not be possible *at first* for independent working class protection to develop far in practice, the failure of the government to prevent wholesale destruction from the air in war, will inevitably throw the tasks of protection on local bodies, and in that event local Labour organisations will be called upon to play a great part in preventing a return to barbarism through the destructive application of modern science. It will be too late when war comes for labour to start to protect its own. NOW is the time for labour to prepare at least its plans for protection of workers' lives, should air raids come.

The three main concrete steps to meet air raids are: the formation of classes to provide information of what to expect and what to do, the provision of gas masks, the construction of gas-proof shelters, as well as decontamination centres, and the evacuation of cities; these in addition to the special application of fire fighting and public health functions of municipal councils.

a) *GAS MASKS*. The best gas mask that is scientifically possible should be available to every worker for use in emergency. It can be shown that the government will not provide this, and an agitation can be conducted over the failure of the government in this respect. At the same time, the limitations of the protection afforded by gas masks can be pointed out.

b) *GAS AND BOMB PROOF SHELTERS*. These again should be available, but the government does not and will not tackle the technical and financial obstacles involved: Therefore again agitation against the government for its failure in this respect (somewhat similar arguments will apply to *decontamination centres*.)

In both the above cases, agitation over the failure of the government to take proper steps to preserve the lives of workers does not imply, and must not be linked to, support of the government for the purpose of additional protection. Just as we should criticise and attack the capitalist system without attempting to patch it up and help it to work, so we criticise the government in these matters for its failure, without attempting to help the government to overcome its failure. Our aim is to establish a socialist government, and our agitation against the inadequacies and crimes of capitalist governments is for the purpose of bringing about their downfall. For only with their downfall is it possible for workers to take adequate measures to protect themselves, and moreover to create a system of society giving peace instead of war. Therefore criticism of the government must be *destructive criticism*, paving the way for constructive proletarian effort.

The measures advised by the government for protection of the inmates of a house against gas, rank very low in the scale of protective measures, and are not comparable to the safety of special large bomb-proof shelters, immune against gas, and fully stocked with the essentials of life. Therefore we stress the inadequacy of house protection measures, which in many cases in crowded areas are quite impossible even. At the same time it is desirable that workers should know even the *very small* amount of protection possible by house protection methods. In large scale air raids, even a tiny amount of protection may mean a lot to *some* men and women of the working class. Accordingly the knowledge should be gained, for example from air raid classes.

c) *AIR RAID CLASSES*. On the principle that all workers should know as much as possible about the protection of their own lives in the event of air raids, such classes, wherever they exist, should be attended. Moreover, workers should press for such classes, preferably from Labour controlled Municipal Councils, or Trades Councils or Trade Union branches employing those qualified to teach (doctors and St. John's Ambulance or Red Cross instructors). Where the government sets up classes, these should be attended, and here an excellent opportunity will occur for anti-war and anti-government propaganda outside, but with reference to, these classes.

d) *EVACUATION OF CITIES*. The government is being driven to consider this step, for London at least. Capitalism has reached the point where it prepares to engage in the abolition of capitals! The great cities are so vulnerable to air attacks, that it is not so much a question of protecting them, as abandoning them, in the eyes of the authorities! Two things are certain about this matter; one is that in a big air raid, the population will attempt to evacuate itself, without waiting for official advice. The other certainty is that even with official supervision, a thorough and orderly evacuation of London is impossible within a short space of time. If we imagine the whole face and organisation of the country changed, the removal of the population of London is at least conceivable, if spread over a period of time, say weeks. But evacuation in or just before an air raid, is a sheer impossibility. At most some thousands of people could reach the country, and there are millions in London. We are forced to conclude that the task of evacuating the great cities to meet the danger of air raids is a task beyond

the power of the authorities. Capitalism merely toys with the idea in its condition of complete bankruptcy. Chaos looms ahead and the government dreams of changing it into an orderly acceptance of "an act of God."

It is evident that the problems of protection against air raids are problems inseparably connected with the overthrow of capitalism, and the triumph of international socialism. Only socialists can bring order out of the chaos which lies ahead. And Socialists will be able to bring *their* order into being only by taking *out of the hands* of capitalist authority, the function of the preservation of society. Socialists must prepare now for that day. At least the idea of independent working class organisation and protection must be spread immediately. If possible the scaffolding of that organisation should be erected now, in the form of workers' air raid classes, the taking of surveys and inventories of the technical means and personnel that would be available for labour protection centres, when created, and so on. Socialists should *plan* their own control of protection now, so that they can *act* when the necessity arises. A sudden series of air raids could bring about an unexpected collapse of capitalist authority. To plan now for the replacement of that authority when the occasion arises may be the means of averting appalling and almost inconceivable chaos and destruction. Indeed, the facing of the whole problem of air raids by the Labour movement now, may determine our whole future development. In times of great danger and disorganisation, such as will almost certainly arise in the not far distant future, those who know what should be done, and have made some preparation for action, will be the rulers of the country—or what is left of it. While we must combine planning for protection with anti-war propaganda, and must make every effort to prevent the outbreak of another world war, we cannot neglect to face the possibility of that war, and meet the problems involved. If this is not done, a future of abysmal degradation for decades will result.

Correspondence

April 30th, 1937.

The Editor,
FIGHT.

Dear Sir,

The worries of publishers increase month by month, and the lack of freedom in the press grows more and more obvious. It was in December last that an advertisement of a book we published, John Langdon-Davies' *Behind The Spanish Barricades*, was banned by the *Observer* on the grounds "of its extreme character."

Now we are in trouble again! This time it is the *Daily Worker*, which has refused an advertisement of our book, *World Revolution* by C. I. R. James, on the grounds that it is "Trotskyist."

In view of the emphasis laid down by the Communist Party during the last year or two on democracy and freedom of expression, it is depressing to find that they too must be numbered among the censors.

Yours truly,

MARTIN SECKER & WARBURG, LTD.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE AIRCRAFT STRIKE ?

THERE have been strong rumours in the press of a projected strike in the Aircraft industry. This was said to be called by the Aircraft Shop Stewards National Council and to be due to take place on May 25th. The A.E.U. issued a statement, not only to the press but to every shop-steward in the Union, to the effect that any such strike, or ballot taken in connection with it, was absolutely unofficial, unrecognised, etc., and no member of the A.E.U. should take any part in it. They also accused the A.S.S.N.C. of choosing May 25th because it was the day before the conference between the Allied Employers and the Unions to discuss certain demands. Actually the date of this conference was only revealed after the date of the strike had been announced.

The history of the events leading up to the proposed strike, which has been brewing for nearly two years, is extremely interesting, both as an analysis of the role of the C.P. in the industrial struggle, and of the relations between the leaders of the T.U.'s and the militant members.

The Aircraft Shop Stewards National Council which is mainly controlled by members of the C.P., was formed about two years ago with the object of co-ordinating the workers in the aircraft industry and to press for an Aircraft Agreement, embodying the following main points —

- (1) An immediate wage advance of 2d. an hour on the basic rate, consolidation of war bonus into basic rate, and minimum wage for adults of 1/4½d. an hour
- (2) Forty hour week with no reduction in pay.
- (3) Restoration of cuts in overtime and piece-work rates made in 1931.
- (4) Payment for all statutory holidays.
- (5) Every aircraft worker a Trade Unionist.

In the early days of its formation, the A.S.S.N.C. waged a militant campaign on these lines with considerable success. T.U. membership in the aircraft factories increased rapidly, but at the same time the workers began to see the need to act together as an *industry* rather than waiting for the A.E.U. to lump in their particularly urgent claims with the common demands of the whole engineering industry. Through the A.S.S.N.C. a ballot was taken for or against strike action last summer to enforce the Aircraft Agreement. The voting was strongly in favour of a strike, but as those voting only represented a small proportion of the workers in the factories, the A.S.S.N.C. decided that its propaganda had not yet penetrated deep enough into the masses and the strike was dropped.

Since then the A.S.S.N.C. has turned its efforts more to bringing pressure to bear on the A.E.U. itself with a view to forcing them to put forward similar demands. The fact that they have been partly successful in this, and that they ever tried this method, has been their undoing. They succeeded in causing the A.E.U. at the Annual Conference in June 1936, to include in its future program

a demand for an Aircraft Agreement (containing fewer points than that put forward by the A.S.S.N.C.). This was followed by an official demand from the A.E.U. to the Employers Federation on February 9th, 1937. But these points gained in the first round have been at the expense of the forces on which the A.S.S.N.C. relies.

This is plain from an analysis of these forces, which can be grouped under three headings: (1) the old type Trade Unionist, a constitutionalist, believing in his Union and convinced that its leaders will do for him all that can be done, meanwhile unwilling to assist in any action outside the Union on account of the money he has invested in it for superannuation benefit. (2) the younger rank and file worker, skilled at his trade but not bound to the same extent in loyalty to his T.U. leaders; ready to act on his own behalf. (3) the "semi-skilled" labour, recruited from the unemployed or a fugitive from one of the withering industries; very glad to have a job at all and more concerned at the moment about keeping it than about improving it.

By playing on their second string—pressure on the T.U.'s—the A.S.S.N.C. have pandered to the constitutionalists and lined up many of the more militant men alongside them, by holding out the hope of winning their demands "constitutionally" through the A.E.U.—a hope which, in view of the reactionary leadership and the dense thickets of "procedure" with which they are able to surround themselves, is doomed to wither, oh so slowly. At the same time as the first class has gained ground, the membership of the third class, the semi-skilled men, has increased enormously with the general expansion of the aircraft industry.

Owing to these two factors the situation is not as favourable now for a successful Aircraft strike as it was any time last summer. Nevertheless there remains the second class of militant workers, who are, if anything, more determined, because more impatient than they were last summer. Whereas then it was the A.S.S.N.C. urging the workers to vote for strike action, now the position is reversed and the more advanced factories, by the pressure which they have brought to bear on the E.C. of the A.S.S.N.C., have forced it into advocating strike action. Just one more illustration of the present C.P. turn away from the leadership of the militant forces to a position far in the rear.

But the efforts of the militants to force a fight for the Aircraft Agreement have been frustrated by the action of the A.E.U. described above. As soon as the A.S.S.N.C. heard that the Employers were to meet the Unions on May 26th, they called a delegate meeting at which it was decided to withdraw strike notices for May 25th. No suggestion was made that they should only be withdrawn conditionally on agreement being reached with the Employers. The E.C. of the A.S.S.N.C. congratulated themselves that they had achieved results—that is, they had forced the A.E.U. to press on with negotiations with the

Employers. But these negotiations are not on the basis of the Aircraft Agreement. All the A.E.U. is asking for is point (1) given above, also that piece work price records be accessible to the Shop Stewards, coupled with a modest 'request' for holidays with pay. In all probability the Employers will offer a compromise, say 1d an hour for all skilled men, which would presumably be accepted by the

A.E.U. What will the A.S.S.N.C. do then? Pass another resolution congratulating themselves on having won a great victory for the Aircraft workers. In any case, unless the militants in the factories get together and decide to take action on their own, neither a strike in Aircraft, nor any really improvement in Aircraft workers' conditions is likely to be seen this year.

LABOUR LEAGUE OF YOUTH CONFERENCE

"WE accept the Memorandum (of the Labour Party) in order to defeat it, as we accept Capitalism in order to defeat it." This statement by Ted Willis, Stalinist organiser of the Labour League of Youth, demonstrates more clearly than any profound analysis, the abyss of demagoguery and ignorance into which the League has fallen. The hypnotised supporters of "the beloved Stalin" swallowed this absurdity, the genuine young Socialists wondered how Willis had become a leader.

The Conference was attended by 172 delegates, 121 branches being represented. It was called (after pressure from the rank and file had made it impossible to refuse any longer) by the ex-N.A.C. (disbanded by the Labour Party by the operation of the Memorandum) to discuss (1) Draft Resolution on the Future of the League; (2) Draft Resolution on the Building of the League (if (1) was carried). Local Leagues were not allowed to submit any Resolutions and only one amendment to each of the Draft Resolutions. This procedure had antagonised many of the Leagues and they refused to send delegates.

The Draft Resolution on the Future of the League (obviously prepared by the C.P.) can be regarded as nothing other than a cleverly phrased but chauvinistic and hypocritical document. Fascism is the enemy, we are told. The youth must rally to the Labour Party to defend bourgeois democracy. Evidently the Labour Party can save the youth from the menace of Fascism. We may ask here whether Social Democracy has ever defeated Fascism in any part of the world, or has not the belief in its efficacy rather led the workers to the execution squad? Every Socialist knows the answer.

Further, the youth must be won to the cause of Socialism and Peace. Why Socialism *and* Peace? Doesn't Socialism presuppose Peace? It does to a Socialist but not to a Stalinist. Peace can be guaranteed if progressive Capitalist countries, such as France and Britain, ally themselves with the Soviet Union, so the Stalinists argue. But the Soviet Union does not want an ally who is threatened with class war and the consequent weakening of Capitalist power. Therefore the class war must be dropped. He who struggles in this way for Socialism is a 'Fascist.' The statement, therefore, that the youth must be won to the cause of Socialism and Peace means, to the Stalinist youth who advance it, "The youth must give up the struggle for Socialism, must defend their own bourgeoisie, so that the Soviet Union, which achieved Socialism long ago, can go on building a little more."

The final paragraph of the Resolution, that the youth "reaffirms its loyalty to the Labour Party" and "the principles for which it stands," clinches the argument—although the Conference had the good sense to delete the latter.

There is no suggestion that the youth demands the right to struggle for a militant class policy inside the Labour movement. No, the Conference did not want class struggle and revolutionary action. The Socialism of Artlee and Lansbury seems to be good enough. Who ever accused these gentlemen of being Socialists in the real meaning of the term? Nobody. That is nobody until the Stalinists, who no longer want Socialism, came along with their class-collaborationist ideas and found their ideal type of Socialists in the Labour Party leaders, the Liberals, the Church, the progressive Conservatives and all other bourgeois sections who are the new "friends of the Soviet Union."

The bulk of the delegates accepted this line put forward by the N.A.C. East Islington, Peckham and Golders Green opposed it with principled Marxist amendments, such as one which put the line of militant and revolutionary class struggle, and further called for an independent Revolutionary Youth Movement, moved by East Islington. Their speakers argued and urged their case with the earnestness and ability that only Marxist knowledge can develop. The Stalinists replied with interjections, laughter and derision. They could not argue (no Stalinist can) but they put up their hands like the robots they are, and defeated every amendment with any Socialist content. As one delegate remarked in disgust, "It is only necessary for any amendment to have the names of East Islington or Golders Green attached to it, for it to be heavily defeated." Those Leagues are called Trotskyist, therefore they are "Fascists," "Agents of Hitler," etc. Such puerile babbling takes the place of reasoned argument when Stalin calls the tune.

Those in opposition to the N.A.C. were clearly shown that they are not to be allowed much longer to continue their work in the League. A quite open threat came from the Platform that "it was time the Youth Militant Group were expelled." There is longer room for real revolutionaries within the League. The N.A.C. find the strength of their arguments too dangerous.

The result of the Conference was that the League decided by a large majority to stay inside the Labour Party, and to ask the Labour Party Executive to draw them up a programme on the lines of "a series of parts, covering Youth and Unemployment, Peace, Sport, Trade Unionism and Socialism." To have "an official recruiting campaign" and to raise "a Youth Fund under the control of the Party Executive." Such is the reactionary work done by the Stalinists who are members of the L.L.O.Y.

The Federation Reports at the end of the Conference, showed a deplorable lack of enthusiasm and a grave loss of membership. One can foresee that, unless the Youth Militant Group can grow to greater strength, in a very short time the Labour League of Youth as a political force in the Youth Movements of this country will be negligible.

Documents of the International No. 7

LENIN'S TESTAMENT

BY THE stability of the Central Committee, of which I spoke before, I mean measures to prevent a split, so far as such measures can be taken. For, of course, the White Guard in *Russkaya Mysl* (I think it was S. E. Oldenburg) was right when, in the first place, in his play against Soviet Russia he banked on the hope of a split in our party, and when, in the second place, he banked for that split on serious disagreements in our party.

Our party rests upon two classes, and for that reason its instability is possible, and if there cannot exist an agreement between such classes its fall is inevitable. In such an event it would be useless to take any measures or in general to discuss the stability of our Central Committee. In such an event no measures would prove capable of preventing a split. But I trust that is too remote a future, and too improbable an event, to talk about.

I have in mind stability as a guarantee against a split in the near future, and I intend to examine here a series of considerations of a purely personal character.

I think that the fundamental factor in the matter of stability—from this point of view—is such members of the Central Committee as Stalin and Trotsky. The relation between them constitutes, in my opinion, a big half of the danger of that split, which might be avoided, and the avoidance of which might be promoted in my opinion by raising the number of members of the Central Committee to fifty or one hundred.

Comrade Stalin, having become General Secretary, has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution. On the other hand, comrade Trotsky, as was proved by his struggle against the Central Committee in connection with the question of the People's Commissariat of Ways and Communications, is distinguished not only by his exceptional ability—personally, he is, to be sure, the most able man in the present Central Committee—but also by his too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be far too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs.

These two qualities of the two most able leaders of the present Central Committee might, quite innocently, lead

to a split, and if our party does not take measures to prevent it, a split might arise unexpectedly.

I will not further characterize the other members of the Central Committee as to their personal qualities. I will only remind you that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev was not, of course, accidental, *but that it ought as little to be used against them as the non-Bolshevism of Trotsky.*

Of the younger members of the Central Committee, I want to say a few words about Piatokov and Bukharin. They are, in my opinion, the most able forces (among the youngest) and in regard to them it is necessary to bear in mind the following: Bukharin is not only the most valuable and biggest theoretician of the party, but also may legitimately be considered the favourite of the whole party; but his theoretical views can only with the very greatest doubt be regarded as fully Marxian, for there is something scholastic in him (he never has learned, and I think never fully understood the dialectic).

And then Piatokov—a man undoubtedly distinguished in will and ability, but too much given over to the administrative side of things to be relied on in a serious political question.

Of course, both these remarks are made by me merely with a view of the present time, or supposing that these two able and loyal workers may not find an occasion to supplement their onesidedness.

December 25th, 1922.

POSTSCRIPT: Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us communists, becomes unsupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite, and more attentive to comrades, less capricious, etc. These circumstances may seem an insignificant trifle, but I think that from the point of view of preventing a split and from the point of view of the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance.

(Our italics.—Editor.)

LENIN.

Doctrine & History for the Youth No. 4

POLITICS AND PSYCHOLOGY

NOT least of Lenin's genius was his understanding of men. There never was a 100% Bolshevik, unless it was Lenin himself. Everyone of the men who made up the Bolshevik Party in 1917 had his personal and political weaknesses. Lenin was able to direct and use the varied capabilities of the men who made up his Central Committee. The intrigues, the personal motives that enter into all politics, the weaknesses, Lenin was able to keep all in control.

From 1903 to 1921 he dominated the party. But being selfless and devoted, he used the centralised power always for the good of the party. Democratic Centralism is the only possible system for the revolutionary party, yet it has its dangers. Plekhanov who first sided with Lenin in 1903, then left him over the question of organisation, wrote prophetic words: "The ultimate end of all this will be that everything will revolve round a single man who, *ex providentia* will concentrate all power in himself."

All was well so long as the single man was Lenin.

At the end of 1921 he fell sick and did not return to work for many months. Then he wrote: "There is no evil without good. I have been sitting quiet for half a year and looking on from the sidelines." From the sidelines, he had seen the dangers inherent in the system, and with the possibility of his own death in mind, he sought means of lessening them. One of the things he did was to write the document that has become known as his Testament.

It should be studied most carefully, for although it is short, there can be no doubt that Lenin weighed and considered every word. It is a keen and profound product of Lenin's mature thought. Reading it today, it is amazing to realise that it was written in 1922. "... the relation between Stalin and Trotsky which I discussed above, it is not a trifle, or it is such a trifle as may acquire a decisive significance." The decisive significance of it, we know. As the way out of danger, Lenin advised: "Remove Stalin." These words quoted by Trotsky in an Open Letter in 1927, and freely printed in dozens of countries by the Left Opposition, were in 1936 to be made to prove Trotsky guilty of terrorism.

The latest batch of arrests in the Soviet Union has been of Trade Union leaders accused of "lack of faith in the proletariat." What would be the fate of Lenin or anyone today in the S.U. rash enough to quote him on the instability of the party, and on the inevitability of its fall if an agreement between the two classes upon which it rests did not exist?

"Our party rests upon two classes." That was written by Lenin late in 1922. In less than 15 years, Stalin the "leader-genius" has by decree achieved a "classless society." "The instability of the party": "the inevitability of its fall." Surely this is Trotskyism? Here indeed is "lack of faith." But faith is a religious term. Lenin was a materialist and dealt with facts.

Lenin wrote the "Testament" for transmission to the 12th Congress of the party, the first one that his illness would not permit him to attend. Hoping for his recovery, however, Krupskaya withheld the notes until the 13th Congress, but before this took place Lenin had died. Stalin, with Zinoviev and Kamenev, was already engaged in a violent struggle to discredit Trotsky. By a vote of 30 to 10, the leadership refused to have the document read to the Congress. Having suppressed it, it was naturally necessary to deny its authenticity when it was widely published by the Opposition. Nevertheless the Stalinists have alluded to it, and thus confirmed its existence, on many occasions. A speech in Moscow by Stalin was reprinted in the International Press Correspondence of Nov. 17th, 1927. "It is said that in the 'Testament' in question, Lenin suggested to the Party congress that it should deliberate on the question of replacing Stalin and appointing another comrade in his place as General Secretary of the party. This is perfectly true ... Yes, comrades, I am rude towards those who are rudely and disloyally destroying and disintegrating the party. I have never made a secret of it and shall not do so now."

And there has grown up within the Communist Parties not only an acceptance of Stalin's "rudeness" but a glorification of it as "simplicity" as a "proletarian" virtue. It is, of course, hardly necessary to state that Lenin using the term "rude" would do so in no bourgeois sense. He meant coarse, brutal.

FIGHT

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL
FOR THE WORKERS' PARTY

HELP US WITH MONEY AND SALES

"Centuries shall elapse and the communist generations of the future will deem us the happiest of all mortals, that have inhabited this planet throughout the ages, because it is we who have seen Stalin, the leader-genius, Stalin the sage, the smiling, the kindly, the supremely simple. When I met Stalin, even at a distance I throbbed with his forcefulness, his magnetism, and his greatness. I wanted to sing, to shriek, to howl from happiness and exaltation."

Speeches such as this by Avdeyenko at the Seventh Congress of Soviets could only be palatable to the vanity of a man of the coarsest character. Yet they are necessary passports today to good jobs in the Soviet Union and the various sections of the Third International.

Too rude and not knowing how to use the great power concentrated in his hands: this was Lenin's careful estimation of Stalin. R. F. Andrews in *The Truth About Trotsky*, (1934), page 68 refers to the Testament:

"Lenin during his last illness wrote a confidential letter, which was read at the party Congress, giving his opinions of the leading members of the Central Committee. He gave a *personal* criticism of Stalin as 'too rude' to be a good secretary, and recommended his replacement ... but when he came to Trotsky, Lenin said that his non-Bolshevism was 'not accidental,' i.e., he gave a decisive political criticism." (Italics by Andrews). Notice how he misquotes to make Trotsky's "non bolshevism" appear "non-accidental." Notice too how Lenin particularly says that the October episode of Zinoviev and Kamenev, though "non accidental," should not be used against them.

"You don't believe Zinoviev and Kamenev could have been guilty of terrorism? Ah, but you don't know about the October episode" the Stalinists screamed during the trial. "It was a logical step from that to terrorism."

Needing also to discredit Bukharin, the Stalinists again turned to the Testament, again deliberately falsifying. In the International Press Correspondence, Vol. 17, No. 13:

"... just before his death Lenin again warned Bukharin and wrote 'his theoretical views can only be considered fully Marxist with a great deal of doubt, because they contain something scholastic. He never studied dialectics and I think he never fully understood them.'"

Compare this with the real estimation of Piatakov and Bukharin by Lenin.

Pollitt can today blandly write that these men were never the "Old Guard" (*Truth About Trotskyism*, Feb. 16th, 1937) and get away with it to his spoon-fed *Daily Worker* readers.

Revolutionary Socialists accept the materialistic interpretation of history. They see a man himself in terms of the nation, the epoch, the class and the family to which he belongs. Nevertheless they recognise the rôle of the individual. On the October Revolution was the imprint of Lenin. The character of the counter-revolution is in the rude, disloyalty of Stalin.

BOOKS TO READ

SOVIET RUSSIA has provided a host of people with a need or an excuse to write a book. They range from serious revolutionaries, through petty bourgeois sycophants—"friends" and enemies of the first workers' state—to counter-revolutionaries.

Of late years, books about Soviet Russia tend to divide into two categories—for or against Stalinism—petty bourgeois liberalism or Marxism. (The counter-revolutionary and the Yellow Press expert in "Bolshevik Horrors" no longer find a market for their old slanders of the October Revolution, so they have accepted Stalinism and become the most virulent denouncers of 'Trotskyism'—that is, Marxism).

Of the critics of Stalinism, only those are of any value to the working class movement who present an objective picture of present-day Russia, base their analysis on Marxism, and give a political perspective for the future of the revolution.

Two recent critics of Stalinism, Andre Gide and Max Eastman, have written books of little real value to our class except insofar as they both present us with facts of life in Russia to-day from which Marxists can draw correct conclusions.

One remembers Max Eastman in Russia at a time when many of the present "Friends of Soviet Russia" were calling on their capitalist governments to save the world from the horror of Bolshevism by direct military intervention. Eastman sunk his whole personality in the revolution in those difficult years of famine and intervention. In order to understand the Russian masses and the revolution they had made, Eastman learned Russian and could speak it like a native. Often he would go and live among the peasants as one of them. This intimate and complete association of himself with the Russian masses probably is the explanation of his seeming bitterness when dealing with the betrayal of the revolution by Stalin and his bureaucratic caste.

His book, *The End of Socialism in Russia* (Secker and Warburg, 1/-) should be read by every Marxist. It is valuable for its concise presentation of the outward results of the abandonment of Marxist theory by the Stalinists. Its weakness, as a book and not an article in a Marxist journal, is its failure to show *why* Soviet Russia has come under the domination of a counter-revolutionary bureaucracy, and its total lack of any perspective.

Andre Gide's book is a revelation—of Andre Gide and of the "Communist" party that took him to its heart and presented him to the working class as a revolutionary.

Andre Gide is a famous French author, an honest idealist, who joined the Communist Party because he believed that in communism he had found his Utopia. He went to Soviet Russia last year but, unfortunately for the Stalinists who usually succeed in keeping their bourgeois recruits under control, Gide is that rarity—an honest bourgeois intellectual. He returned from Russia and wrote *Back From The U.S.S.R.* (Secker and Warburg, 2/6). He obviously intended his book to be a

record of his idealistic soul's torment when faced with the stark reality of Stalin's Russia. (Probably, the reality of the proletarian revolution in Lenin's days—when Max Eastman was there—there have torn his soul asunder too!) On the surface the book is just that: a beautiful piece of prose writing recording the spiritual agony of an honest idealist in his disillusionment. Below the surface, however, and occasionally shooting right up above it, Gide has recorded a damning exposure of the conditions of the masses under the rule of a corrupt bureaucracy that has betrayed the revolution whilst lying to the world's workers about the "socialism" already built in a "classless" state. For that we have to thank not Gide's Marxism—it never existed in this French Communist—but his courage in writing of what he saw and experienced in Stalin's Russia. In publishing this translation, Martin Secker and Warburg have rendered a service to literature.

"World Revolution." C. L. R. James, (Secker & Warburg). 12/6.

Excitingly, yet simply written, this book presents to you a bird's eye view of the whole development of the Comintern since Lenin's death and the mistakes committed by the Stalinist bureaucracy based on the theory of "Socialism in a single country." This is the first book to be published in this country which places our programme before the British workers. Although the price is high, every comrade should endeavour to obtain a copy in the local library.

CORRECTION

Owing to its being late for the press, our article on France in the May issue contained a number of printing errors. Also it read that Céline attacked the Trade Union leaders. Céline has written a book criticising the Soviet Union, but the attack on the Trade Unions was by Legay.

The following booksellers and newsagents also stock **FIGHT** and other Trotskyist literature:

Bibliophile, Little Russell Street, W.C.1.

Burns and Berry, Shaftesbury Avenue, W.C.

Colletts, Charing Cross Road, W.C.

Clapham Socialist Bookshop, 79 Bedford Road, Clapham North.

Johns, Torrington Place, W.C.

Librairie Internationale, 73 Russell Square, W.C.

Librairie Internationale, Percy Street, W.C.

Lahr, Red Lion Square, W.C.

London Weekly Mall, New Bridge Street.

Parton Street Bookshop, Parton Street, W.C.

Preis, Little Russell Street, W.C.

Solosky, Charing Cross Road, W.C.

Strauberg, Coptic Street, W.C.

Socialist Bookshop, 35 St. Bride Street, E.C.4.