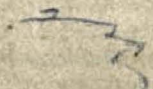


LEON TROTSKY

Communism *and* Syndicalism

*On the Trade
Union Question*

15 cents



Communist League of America
(Opposition)

TRANSLATED BY MAX SHACHTMAN

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

The arguments brought forward in this pamphlet are devoted specifically to the problems of the labor movement of France, the classic land of syndicalism. But dealing as they do with such fundamental questions as the rôle of the revolutionary workers' party, the state, the bureaucracy in the labor movement and trade union tactics in general, they have universal application. This is particularly true of America. The historical development of the revolutionary labor movement in the United States has posed the question of syndicalism in its specific American form (the I. W. W.) with especial prominence. The task of assembling the revolutionary elements in the working class into a single body has been greatly hampered by theoretical confusion on the issues which the author illuminates in these pages. Some of these losses are irretrievable, for neither movements nor their participants can stand on one spot. Degeneration is the unfailing price for failure to develop and advance. In the period since the war we have seen not a little of this degeneration in the camp of the class conscious workers, and precisely for this reason. Much can yet be gained, however, by a clarification of the questions. This pamphlet, so sharp and clear in its reasoning, so fortified in every line by the tested theory of Marxism, can justly be called a timely and significant contribution to this work of clarification. For that reason we believe it deserves the particular attention of the American revolutionaries.

In the decade before the world war the proletarian revolt against the parliamentary reformism of the Socialist party and the sectarian sterility and legalism of the Socialist Labor party found two main points of crystallization. One of these was the Left wing in the S. P. The other was

the I. W. W. Both of these movements had elements of a revolutionary party. The task of Communism in America was to unite them into a single revolutionary organization. To the failure to understand this task, and consequently the failure to accomplish it to any appreciable degree, we owe not a little of the weakness of the American Communist movement. A large share of the responsibility for this belongs to the party itself. It could not see the revolutionary implications of the I. W. W. movement and did not know how to mature and assimilate them. But this fact does not absolve the revolutionary syndicalists from responsibility. They contributed more than a generous measure of prejudice and dogmatism to the issue. If the party walked blindfolded, the I. W. W. militants, for the greater part, put stumbling blocks in its path.

In its struggle against parliamentary reformism and legalism the I. W. W. introduced and popularized a number of ideas and practices of a decidedly progressive and revolutionary character, ideas which retain their validity today. Its emphasis on "direct action" was an anticipation, in incomplete form it is true, of the Bolshevik principle which puts the mass action of the workers above parliamentary activity. Its advocacy of industrial as against craft unionism prepared the way for modern organization of the workers. Another progressive feature was the emphasis the I. W. W. placed on the unskilled—the most deprived and exploited, the most numerous and potentially the most revolutionary section of the working class. From its first convention onward it declared solidarity with the Negro and welcomed him into its ranks. The members of the I. W. W. went through a number of historic class battles and displayed unexampled militancy and sacrifice. Solidarity with all struggling workers everywhere and an unceasing emphasis on the revolutionary goal of the struggle were central features in all of its activity.

These aspects of the I. W. W. were its strong, progressive and revolutionary side. That it represented, as

did revolutionary syndicalism in general, a step forward from parliamentary socialism was acknowledged by the theses of the second congress of the Communist International. That it occupied a place in the vanguard of the American working class was attested by the fierce persecution launched against it.

The weak side of the I. W. W. movement, as of the syndicalist movement on an international scale, was its theoretical incompleteness. Because of its indifference to revolutionary theory it did not and could not pose the fundamental questions of the revolution in their full implications and find the answer to them. There cannot be a really revolutionary movement without a revolutionary theory as Lenin said long ago. The conditions of the war sharpened the class relations to an extraordinary degree and exposed this contradiction with shattering force. The negative attitude toward the state—the ostrich policy of “ignoring” the state—disarmed the movement when this same state—the “executive committee of the capitalist class” and “its special body of armed men”—was hurled against it. The proletarian reaction against parliamentary reformism, developing into opposition to “politics” and indifference to political questions in general, left the I. W. W. without a compass before the complicated problems of war, problems which in their very essence were political to the highest degree. The justifiable hostility to bourgeois and reformist parties grew, as a result of loose thought, into an opposition to the concept even of a proletarian revolutionary party. This was the crowning theoretical error of the movement of American syndicalism, or industrialism. It prevented the conscious organization of the proletarian vanguard into a single uniform body able to work out the program of the revolution and strive for its application with united force.

The experiences of the war and the Russian revolution disclosed the shortcomings of the I. W. W. as well as those of the Left wing in the S. P. The problems elucidated in

the living experience of the Russian revolution became, as they remain to this very day, the touchstone for revolutionary organizations throughout the world. The Marxist teachings on the state and on the rôle of the workers' party as the vanguard of the class, without which the class cannot raise itself to power, received brilliant and irrefutable confirmation in the Bolshevik revolution. Adjustment to these lessons taught by life could not be evaded.

In the failure to make this adjustment is written the whole story of the post-war degeneration of the I. W. W. The record of this entire period is a record of the steady and systematic displacement of the I. W. W. from its old position in the vanguard of the struggle; of its transformation into the antipode of its former revolutionary self. In so far as the upper and official stratum of the organization is concerned the keynote of anti-capitalism sounded in the best days has been transformed into anti-Communism. Out of a militant body of revolutionaries they have striven to make a reactionary sect.

"No politics" and "no party"—these are the formulæ under which this degeneration has proceeded. And together with them has gone the slogan of "no leaders"—that slogan of demagogues who themselves aspire to leadership without qualifications. As has been remarked before, the leadership of the Communist party contributed to the tragic failure to build the new Communist movement in part on the foundations of the militant I. W. W. Intellectualism, condescension, the control and command sickness, played here, as always, an evil rôle. It is necessary to understand this and to say it plainly. But an understanding and acknowledgment of this fact cannot undo the past. We must start from where we are. If we bear in mind the mistakes of the past in order to avoid them in the future something can yet be done of positive value for the revolution. It is not too late even now to make a place for those syndicalist workers who are imbued with a hatred of capitalism and the will to struggle against it—and there are many of

them—under the Communist banner. It is quite true that the official party leadership is unable to do this, as it is unable to solve any of the problems of Communism. All the greater, therefore, is the responsibility of the Opposition.

In the ranks of the former members and sympathizers of the I. W. W., and to a lesser extent within the organization, are experienced militants who have not forgotten the old tradition, whose concepts do not begin and end with the phobia against Communism. Their spirit is alien to the spirit of the Gahans and Sandgrens. They are sympathetic to the Russian revolution and to Communism. Only they have no faith in the party. Their skepticism about the American Communist party has had a certain amount of justification, as we have always known. But, granting serious defects in the party, what is to be done about it? As we see the thing—since we proceed from the point of view that a party cannot be dispensed with—one must either struggle to reform the party or, if he thinks it is hopeless, form a new one. We, the Opposition, have taken the former course. The great mass of the radical workers who have lost faith in the dogmas of the I. W. W. without acquiring confidence in the party have fallen into passivity. The post-war prosperity, which depressed the entire labor movement to a low point, facilitated this passive attitude. "Nothing is happening. Let us wait and see," became a sort of platform for many during this period. People who had been concerned with the problem of making a revolution turned to the problem of making a living while awaiting further developments.

But what now? The economic crisis is smashing all this calm routine. Class relations are being sharpened and all the conditions are being created for a revival of the militant labor movement. What path will this movement take and what part will be played by those who consider themselves to be revolutionists? This question calls for an answer. In any case it cannot be answered with a wait-

ing, or passive attitude. A time of storm, and that is what is before us, above all is a time when nobody can stand aside; that is, nobody who doesn't want to play the part of a reactionary. Revolutionary health requires exercise.

* * *

This pamphlet is composed of a collection of articles written by comrade Trotsky at various times on the problems of the French labor movement. The first articles were written in the early part of 1923 after Monatte, the leader of the revolutionary syndicalists, and the group associated with him had just entered the Communist Party of France. The two articles written toward the end of 1929 take up the discussion again after the intervening period of more than six years—a period in which Monatte had steadily retreated to his old position and consequently widened the chasm between himself and the Communists.

The following article, entitled "Monatte Crosses the Rubicon", written at the end of 1930, draws a balance to the discussion with the syndicalists who had crowned their reactionary trend by a bloc with Dumoulin. Dumoulin is one of the prominent leaders of the C. G. T., the reformist general labor federation. Once a syndicalist of the "Left", he betrayed the movement and took a leading part in the expulsion of the revolutionary wing of the C. G. T. which resulted in a split and the formation of a rival general federation in 1921. Now he is talking "Left" again and this serves as the cover for the passage of Monatte into the camp of reaction through the medium of a bloc with him.

The final article in the pamphlet deals with questions of Communist policy in the trade unions which are at present the subject of discussion in the French section of the International Left Opposition. Its direct relation to the other articles, and even more, its pointed applicability to the problems of the Communists and the trade unions in the United States which it helps to illumine, induced us to include it in this invaluable collection.

NEW YORK, *February 1931*

James P. Cannon

A Necessary Discussion with Our Syndicalist Comrades

THIS ARTICLE WAS written as a reply to the arguments of comrade Louzon, immediately after the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International. But at that time, more attention was being devoted to the struggle against the socialist Right, against the dissidents of the second set, Verfeuil, Frossard, etc. In this struggle our efforts were united with those of the syndicalists, and I preferred to postpone the publication of this article. We are firmly convinced that our excellent understanding with the syndicalists will not cease to exist. The entrance of our old friend Monatte into the Communist party was a great day to us. The revolution needs men of this kind. But it would be wrong to pay for a *rapprochement* with a confusion of ideas. In the course of recent months, the Communist Party of France has been purified and consolidated; hence we can enter into a tranquil and friendly discussion with our syndicalist comrades, with whom we still have many common struggles to go through.

Comrade Louzon, in a series of articles and personal explanations, represented views with regard to the fundamental question of the relations between party and trade union, which differ radically from the opinions of the Com-

munist International and from Marxism. French comrades whose opinion I am accustomed to respect speak with great esteem of comrade Louzon and his devotion to the proletariat. It is all the more necessary, therefore, to correct the errors made by him in such an important question. Comrade Louzon defends the complete and unqualified independence of the trade unions. Against what? Obviously against certain attacks. Whose? Against attacks ascribed to the party. Trade union autonomy, an indisputable necessity, is endowed with a certain absolute, and almost mystical significance by Louzon. And our comrade here appeals, quite wrongly, to Marx. The trade unions, says Louzon, represent the "working class as a whole". The party, however, is only a party. The working class as a whole cannot be subordinated to the party. There is not even room for equality between them. The working class has its aim in itself, the party, however, can only either serve the working class or itself. The party cannot annex the working class. The Moscow congresses and the mutual representation of the Communist International and the Red International of Labor Unions signified, according to Louzon, the actual equalization of party and class. This mutual representation has now been abolished. The party thereby resumes its rôle of servant again. Comrade Louzon approves of this. According to him, this was also the standpoint of Marx. The end of the mutual representation of the political and the trade union internationals in each other is, to Louzon, the rejection of the errors of Lassalle (!) and of the social democrats (!) and a return to the principles of Marxism.

This is the essence of an article that appeared in *LA VIE OUVRIERE* of December 15. The most astonishing thing in this and other similar articles is that the writer is obviously, consciously and determinedly, shutting his eyes to what is actually going on in France. One might think that the article was written on Sirius. How else is it possible to understand the assertion that the trade unions represent

the working class as a whole? Of what country is Louzon talking? If he means France, the trade unions there, so far as we are informed, do not, unfortunately, include even half of the working class. The criminal manoeuvre of the reformist trade unions, supported on the Left by some few anarchists, has split the French trade union organization. Neither of the two trade union federations embraces more than 300,000 workers. Neither singly nor together are they entitled to identify themselves with the whole of the French proletariat of which they form only a modest part. Moreover, each trade union organization pursues a different policy. The reformist trade union federation works in co-operation with the bourgeoisie: the Unitary Trade Union Federation [C. G. T. U.] is fortunately revolutionary. In the latter organization, Louzon represents but one tendency. What then does he mean by the assertion that the working class, which he obviously regards as synonymous with the trade union organization, bears its own aim in itself? With whose help, and how, does the French working class express this aim? With the help of Jouhaux's organization? Certainly not. With the help of the C. G. T. U.? The C. G. T. U. has already rendered great services. But unfortunately it is not yet the whole working class. The C. G. T. U. was originally led by the anarcho-syndicalists of the "Pact".* At the present time its leaders are syndicalist Communists. In which of these two

* The reference is to the "pact" signed by eighteen anarchists and semi-anarchists, including even members of the Communist Party of France, and kept secret for quite some time after its conception in February 1921. It was permeated with the spirit of free-masonry and "pure syndicalism" and its signatories set themselves the aim of taking and keeping hold of the trade union movement in France as against the leadership of the Communists. Its revelation sometime before the St. Etienne convention of the Unitary General Confederation of Labor created a stir. Its authors, including Besnard, Verdier, Totti and others, did not succeed in controlling the C. G. T. U., the leadership of which fell into the hands of the Communists and Communist-Syndicalists.—Tr.

periods has the C. G. T. U. best represented the interests of the working class? Who is to judge? If we now attempt, with the aid of the international experience of *our party*, to answer this question, then, in Louzon's opinion, we place ourselves in a dangerous dilemma, for we then demand that the party judge what policy is most beneficial to the working class. That is, we place the party above the working class. But if we were to turn to the *working class as a whole* we would unfortunately find it scattered, impotent and mute. The various trade union federations, their separate trade unions, and the separate groups within the trade unions would give us different replies. But the overwhelming majority of the proletariat, standing outside both trade union federations would, at the present time, give us no reply at all.

There is no country in which the trade union organization embraces the whole working class. But in some countries, it at least comprises a very large section of the workers. This is, however, not the case in France. If, as Louzon opines, the party must "annex" the working class (what is this term actually supposed to mean?), then for what reason does comrade Louzon accord this right to syndicalism? He may reply: "Our trade union organization is still weak. But we do not doubt its future and its final victory." To this we should reply: "Certainly; we too share this conviction. But we have just as little doubt that the party will win the unqualified confidence of the great majority of the working class." Neither for the party nor the trade unions is it a question of "annexing" the proletariat—Louzon does wrong in employing the expression used by our opponents who are fighting the revolution—it is a question of winning the confidence of the proletariat. And it is only possible to do this with correct tactics, tested by experience. Where and by whom are these tactics consciously, carefully and critically prepared? Who suggests them to the working class? Certainly they do not fall from heaven. And the working class as a whole, as a

many vacillations, and extensive experience, that insight as to the right ways and methods dawns upon the minds of the best elements of the working class, the vanguard of the masses. This applies equally to party and trade union. The trade union also begins as a small group of active workers and grows gradually as its experience enables it to gain the confidence of the masses. But while the revolutionary organizations are struggling to gain influence in the working class, the bourgeois ideologists oppose them and set up the "working class as a whole" against the party and the trade unions, accusing them of wanting to "annex" the working class. LE TEMPS writes this whenever there is a strike. In other words, the bourgeois ideologists oppose the *working class as object* to the *working class as conscious subject*. For it is only through its class conscious minority that the working class gradually becomes a factor in history. We thus see that the criticism levelled by comrade Louzon against the "unwarranted claims" of the party applies equally well to the "unwarranted claims" of the "thing in itself", does not teach us these tactics either. It seems to us that comrade Louzon has not posed this question. "The proletariat has its aim within itself." If we strip this sentence of its mystical trappings, its obvious meaning is that the historical tasks of the proletariat are determined by the social position of the class and by its rôle in production, in society and in the state. This is beyond dispute. But this truth does not help us answer the question with which we are concerned, namely: How is the proletariat to arrive at subjective insight into the historical task posed by its objective position? Were the proletariat as a whole capable of grasping its historical task, it would need neither party nor trade union. Revolution would be born simultaneously with the proletariat. But in actuality the process required to impart to the proletariat an insight into its historic mission is very long and painful, and full of internal contradictions.

It is only in the course of long struggles, severe trials,

trade unions. Above all in France; for French syndicalism—we must repeat this—was and is, in its organization and theory, likewise a *party*. This is also why it arrived, during its classic period, 1905-1907, at the theory of the *active minority*, and not at the theory of the “*collective proletariat*”. For what else is an active minority, held together by unity of conceptions, if not a party? And on the other hand: would not a trade union mass organization, not containing a class conscious minority, be a purely formal and meaningless organization?

The fact that French syndicalism was a *party* was fully confirmed by the split which took place as soon as divergences in political viewpoints appeared in its ranks. But the party of revolutionary syndicalism fears the aversion felt by the French working class for parties as such. Therefore it has not assumed the name of party, and has remained incomplete as regards organization. The party attempted to have its membership coincide with that of the trade unions, or at least to take cover behind the trade unions. The actual subordination of the trade unions to certain tendencies, factions, and even cliques of syndicalism is thus explained. This is the explanation of the “Pact” with its caricature of free-masonry, intended to hold a party organization together within the fold of trade union organization. And vice versa: The Communist International has most determinedly combatted the split in the trade union movement in France, that is, its actual conversion into a syndicalist party. The main consideration of the Communist International has been the historical task of the working class as a whole, and the enormous independent significance of the trade union organization for solving the tasks of the proletariat. In this respect, the Communist International has from its very inception defended the real and living independence of the trade unions, in the spirit of Marxism.

Revolutionary syndicalism, which was in France in many respects the precursor of present-day Communism,

has acknowledged the theory of the active minority, that is, of the party, but without openly becoming a party. It has thereby prevented the trade unions from becoming, if not an organization of the whole working class (which is not possible in a capitalist system), at least of its broad masses. The Communists are not afraid of the word "party", for their party has nothing in common, and will have nothing in common, with the other parties. Their party is not one of the political parties of the bourgeois system, it is the active, class-conscious minority of the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard. Hence, the Communists have no reason, either in their ideology or their organization, to hide themselves behind the trade unions. They do not misuse the trade unions for machinations behind the scenes. They do not in any way disturb the independent development of the trade unions, and support them in action in every respect. But at the same time the Communist party reserves the right of expressing its opinion on all questions in the labor movement, including the trade union question, to criticize trade union tactics, and to make definite proposals to the trade unions, which, on their part, are at liberty to accept or reject these proposals. The party strives to win the confidence of the working class, above all, of that section organized in the trade unions.

What is the meaning of the quotations from Marx adduced by comrade Louzon? It is a fact that Marx wrote, in 1868, that the workers' party would emerge from the trade union. When writing this he was thinking mainly of England, at that time the sole developed capitalist country already possessing extensive labor organizations. Half a century has passed since then. Historical experience has in general confirmed Marx' prophecies in so far as England is concerned. The English Labor Party has actually been built up on the foundation of the trade union. But does comrade Louzon really think that the English Labor Party, as it is today, led by Henderson and Clynes, can be looked upon as representative of the interests of the proletariat

as a whole? Most decidedly not. The English Labor Party betrays the cause of the proletariat just as the trade union bureaucracy betrays it, although in England the trade unions approach nearer to comprising the working class as a whole than anywhere else. On the other hand, we cannot doubt but that our Communist influence will grow in this English Labor Party which emerged from the trade unions, and that this will contribute to render more acute the struggle of masses and leaders within the trade unions until the treacherous bureaucrats are ultimately driven forth and the party is completely reformed and renewed. And we, like comrade Louzon, belong to an International which includes the little Communist Party of England, but which combats the Second International supported by the English Labor Party that had its origin in the trade unions.

In Russia—and in the law of capitalist development Russia is just the antipode of England—the Communist party, the former social democratic party, is older than the trade unions, and created the trade unions. Today, the trade unions and the workers' state in Russia are completely under the influence of the Communist party, which is far from having its origin in the trade unions, but on the contrary created and trained them. Will comrade Louzon contend that Russia has evolved in contradiction to Marxism? Is it not simpler to say that Marx' judgment on the origin of the party in the trade union has been proved by experience to have been correct for England, and even there not one hundred percent correct, but that Marx never had the least intention of laying down what he himself once scornfully designated as a "super-historical law"? All the other countries of Europe, including France, stand between England and Russia in this question. In some countries the trade unions are older than the party, in others the contrary has been the case; but nowhere, except in England and partially in Belgium, has the party of the proletariat emerged from the trade unions. In any case, no Communist party has developed organically out of the trade unions.

But are we to deduce from this that the Communist International has originated wrongly?

When the English trade unions alternately supported the Conservatives and the Liberals and represented to a certain extent a labor appendage to these parties, when the political organization of the German workers was nothing more than a Left wing of the democratic party, when the followers of Lassalle and Eisenach were quarrelling among themselves—Marx demanded the independence of the trade unions from all parties. This formula was dictated by the desire to oppose the labor organizations to all bourgeois parties, and to prevent their being too closely bound up with socialist sects. But comrade Louzon may perhaps remember that it was Marx who founded the First International as well, the object of which was to guide the labor movement in all countries, in every respect, and to render it fruitful. This was in 1864, and *the International created by Marx was a party*. Marx refused to wait until the international party of the working class formed itself in some way out of the trade unions. He did his utmost to strengthen the influence of scientific socialism in the trade unions—as first laid down in 1847 in the manifesto issued by the Communist party. When Marx demanded for the trade unions complete independence from the parties and sects of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, he did this in order to make it easier for scientific socialism to gain dominance in the trade unions. Marx never saw in the party of scientific socialism one of the ordinary parliamentary democratic political parties. For Marx, the International was the class conscious working class, represented at that time by a truly very small vanguard.

If comrade Louzon were consistent in his trade union metaphysics and in his interpretation of Marx, he would say: "Let us renounce the Communist party, and wait till this party arises out of the trade unions. For the present French trade unions can only regain their unity, and win

decisive influence over the masses, if their best elements are constituted in the class-conscious revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, that is, in a Communist party. Marx gave no final answer to the question of the relations between party and trade unions, and indeed he could not do so. For these relations are dependent on the varying circumstances in each separate case. Whether the party and the trade union federation are mutually represented on their central committees, or whether they form joint committees of action in need, is a question of no decisive importance. The forms of organization may alter, but the decisive rôle played by the party is unalterable. The party, if it be worthy of the name, includes the whole vanguard of the working class, and uses its ideological influence for rendering every branch of the labor movement fruitful, especially the trade union movement. But if the trade unions are worthy of their name, they include an ever growing mass of workers, many backward elements among them. But they can only fulfill their task when consciously guided on firmly established principles. And they can only have this leadership when their best elements are united in the party of proletarian revolution.

The purification of the Communist Party of France, which rid itself on the one hand of whining petty bourgeois, of drawing room heroes, of political Hamlets and sickening careerists, and on the other hand actuated the *rapprochement* of Communists and revolutionary syndicalists, implies a great stride towards the creation of suitable relations between trade union organizations and the political organization, which in turn means a great advance for the revolution.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Prejudices Again!

COMRADE LOUZON'S new article contains more errors than his earlier ones, although this time his main line of argument takes an entirely different turn.

In his former articles, comrade Louzon's starting points were abstractions, which assumed that the trade unions represented the "working class as a whole". In my reply I put the question: "Where does comrade Louzon write his articles—in France or on Sirius?" In his latest article comrade Louzon deserts the shaky foundation of universal laws, and attempts to stand upon the national ground of French syndicalism. Yes, he says, the French trade unions are not actually the working class as a whole, but only the active minority of the working class. That is, comrade Louzon acknowledges that the trade unions form a sort of revolutionary party. But this syndicalist party is distinguished by being purely proletarian in its constituents; here lies its tremendous advantage over the Communist party. And it has still another advantage: the syndicalist party categorically rejects the bourgeois state institutions; it does not "recognize" democracy, and thus takes no part in the parliamentary struggles.

Comrade Louzon is never weary of repeating that we are dealing with the peculiarities of French development, and with these only. Beginning with a broad generalization, in the course of which he transformed Marx into a syndicalist, Louzon now deserts England, Russia, and Germany. He does not reply to our question on why he himself belongs to the Communist International, in company

with the small English Communist Party, and not to the second International, in company with the English trade unions and the English Labor Party which is supported by them. Louzon began with a "*super-historical*" law for all countries, and closes by claiming an exceptional law for **France**. In this new form Louzon's theory bears a purely national character. More than this, its essential character excludes the possibility of an International; how can common tactics be spoken of unless there are common fundamental premises? It is certainly very difficult to understand why comrade Louzon belongs to the Communist International. It is no less difficult to understand why he belongs to the French Communist Party, since there exists another party possessing all the advantages of the Communist, and none of its drawbacks.

But though comrade Louzon leaves the international group for the sake of the national, he systematically ignores that "national" question put him in our former article: What about the rôle played by the C. G. T. during the war? The rôle played by Jouhaux was by no means less treacherous and despicable than that played by Rénaudel. The sole difference consisted in the fact that the social patriotic party fit their lives and actions into a certain system, in wretched and stupid improvisations. It may be said that as regards patriotic betrayal, the socialist party, with its definite character, surpassed the semi-definite syndicalist party. At bottom, Jouhaux was at one with Rénaudel.

And how is it today? Does Louzon desire the union of the two confederations? We desire it. The international deems it necessary. We should not be alarmed even if the union were to give Jouhaux the majority. Naturally we would not say—as does comrade Louzon—that syndicalism, although headed by Jouhaux, Dumoulin, and their like, is the purest form of proletarian organization, that it embodies "the working class as a whole", etc., etc.—for

such a phrase would be a travesty upon reality. But we should consider the formation of a larger trade union organization, that is, the concentration of greater proletarian masses, forming a wider battle-field for the struggle for the ideas and tactics of Communism, to be a great gain for the cause of revolution. But for this the first necessity is that the ideas and tactics of Communism do not remain in mid-air, but are organized in the form of a party. With regard to comrade Louzon, he does not pursue his thoughts to the end, but his logical conclusion would be the substitution of the party by a trade union organization of the "active minority". The inevitable result of this would be a substitute party and a substitute trade union, for those trade unions required by comrade Louzon are too indefinite for the rôle of a party, and too small for the rôle of a trade union.

Comrade Louzon's arguments to the effect that the trade unions do not want to soil their fingers by contact with the organs of bourgeois democracy, already form a weak echo of anarchism. It may be assumed that the majority of the workers organized in the C. G. T. U. will vote at the elections for the Communist party (at least we hope that comrade Louzon, as a member of the Communist party, will call upon them to do so), while the majority of the members of the yellow confederation will vote for the Blum-Rénaudel party. The trade union, as a form of organization, is not adapted for parliamentary deputies. It is simply a case of division of labor on the same class foundation. Or is it perchance a matter of indifference to the French worker what happens in parliament? The workers do not think so. The trade unions have frequently reacted to the legislative work of parliament, and will continue to do so in the future. And if there are, at the same time, Communist deputies in parliament itself, who work hand in hand with the revolutionary trade unions against the deeds of violence and blows of imperialist

"democracy", this is naturally a plus and not a minus. French "tradition" says that deputies are traitors. But the Communist party has been called into being for the express purpose of doing away with all tradition. Should any deputy think of retreating from the class line, he will be thrown out of the party. Our French party has learned how to do this, and all distrust in it is completely unfounded.

But Louzon complains that the party contains many petty bourgeois intellectuals. This is so. But the Fourth Congress of the Communist International recognized and adopted resolutions upon this, and the resolutions have not been without effect. Further work is required to establish the proletarian character of the party. But we shall not attain this end with the self-contradictory trade union metaphysics of comrade Louzon, but rather by means of systematic party work in the trade unions, that is, the principal field, and in every other field of proletarian struggle. There is already a considerable number of workers in the Central Committee of our French party. This is mirrored in the whole party. This is taking place in accordance with the resolutions passed by the Fourth Congress on parliamentary and municipal elections. By this the party will win the confidence of the revolutionary proletariat. And this means that the party will less and less lack really competent and active proletarians to occupy the most important and responsible revolutionary posts. I greatly fear that comrade Louzon's views may exercise a retarding influence on this profound progressive evolution of the vanguard of the French working class. But I have no doubt that Communism will succeed in overcoming even this obstacle.

MOSCOW, *May 8, 1923*

Communism and Syndicalism

THE trade union question is one of the most important for the labor movement, and consequently, for the Opposition. Without a precise position in the trade union question, the Opposition will be unable to win real influence upon the working class. That is why I believe it necessary to submit here, *for discussion*, a few considerations on the trade union question.

The Party and the Trade Unions

1. The Communist party is the fundamental weapon of revolutionary action of the proletariat, the combat organization of its vanguard that must raise itself to the rôle of leader of the working class in all the spheres of its struggle without exception, and consequently, in the trade union field.

2. Those who, in principle, oppose trade union autonomy to the leadership of the Communist party, oppose thereby—whether they want to or not—the most backward proletarian section to the vanguard of the working class, the struggle for immediate demands to the struggle for the complete liberation of the workers, reformism to Communism, opportunism to revolutionary Marxism.

Revolutionary Syndicalism and Communism

3. Pre-war French syndicalism, at the epoch of its

rise and expansion, by fighting for trade union autonomy, actually fought for its independence from the bourgeois government and its parties, among them that of reformist-parliamentary socialism. This was a struggle against opportunism—for a revolutionary road. Revolutionary syndicalism did not, in this connection, make a fetish of the autonomy of the mass organizations. On the contrary, it understood and preached the leading rôle of the revolutionary minority in relation to the mass organizations, which reflect the working class with all its contradictions, its backwardness and its weaknesses.

4. The theory of the active minority was, in essence, an uncompleted theory of a proletarian party. In all its practise, revolutionary syndicalism was an embryo of a revolutionary party, as against opportunism, that is, it was a remarkable draft outline of revolutionary Communism.

5. The weakness of anarcho-syndicalism, even in its classic period, was the absence of a correct theoretical foundation, and, as a result, a wrong understanding of the nature of the state and its rôle in the class struggle; an incomplete, not fully developed and, consequently, a wrong conception of the rôle of the revolutionary minority, that is, the party. Thence the mistakes in tactics, such as the fetishism of the general strike, the ignoring of the connection between the uprising and the seizure of power, etc.

6. After the war, French syndicalism found not only its refutation but also its development and its completion in Communism. Attempts to revive revolutionary syndicalism now would be to try to turn back history. For the labor movement, they can only have a reactionary significance.

THE EPIGONES OF SYNDICALISM

7. The epigones of syndicalism transform (in words)

the independence of the trade union organizations from the bourgeoisie and the reformist socialists into independence *in general*, into *absolute* independence from all parties, the Communist included.

If, in the period of expansion, syndicalism considered itself a vanguard, and fought for the leading rôle of the vanguard minority among the backward masses, the epigones of syndicalism now fight against the identical wishes of the Communist vanguard, attempting, even though without success, to base themselves upon the lack of development and the prejudices of the more backward sections of the working class.

8. Independence from the influence of the bourgeoisie cannot be a passive state. It can express itself only by political acts, that is, by the struggle against the bourgeoisie. This struggle must be inspired by a distinct program which requires organization and tactics for its application. It is the union of program, organization and tactics that constitutes the party. In this way, the real independence of the proletariat from the bourgeois government cannot be realized unless the proletariat conducts its struggle under the leadership of a revolutionary and not an opportunist party.

9. The epigones of syndicalism would have one believe that the trade unions are sufficient by themselves. Theoretically, this means nothing, but in practise it means the dissolution of the revolutionary vanguard into the backward masses, that is, the trade unions.

The larger the mass the trade unions embrace, the better they are able to fill their mission. A proletarian party, on the contrary, merits its name only if it is ideologically homogeneous, bound by unity of action and organization. To represent the trade unions as self-sufficient because the proletariat has already attained its "majority", is to flatter the proletariat, is to picture it other than it is and can be under capitalism, which keeps enormous masses of workers in ignorance and backwardness, leaving only the

vanguard of the proletariat the possibility of breaking through all the difficulties and arriving at a clear comprehension of the tasks of its class as a whole.

The Real Autonomy of the Trade Unions Is Not Violated by Party Leadership

10. The real, practical and not the metaphysical autonomy of trade union organization is not in the least disturbed nor is it diminished by the struggle of the Communist party for influence. Every member of the trade union has the right to vote as he thinks necessary and to elect the one who seems to him most worthy. Communists possess this right in the same way as others.

The conquest of the majority by the Communists in the directing organs takes place quite in accordance with the principles of autonomy, that is, the self-administration of the trade unions. On the other hand, no trade union statute can prevent or prohibit the party from electing the general secretary of the Federation of Labor to its central committee, for here we are entirely in the domain of the autonomy of the party.

11. In the trade unions, the Communists, of course, submit to the discipline of the party, no matter what posts they occupy. This does not exclude but pre-supposes their submission to trade union discipline. In other words, the party does not impose upon them any line of conduct that contradicts the state of mind or the opinions of the majority of the members of the trade unions. In entirely exceptional cases, when the party considers impossible the submission of its members to some *reactionary* decision of the trade union, it points out openly to its members the consequences that flow from it, that is, removals from trade union posts, expulsions, and so forth.

With juridical formulæ in these questions—and auton-

omy is a purely juridical formula—one can get nowhere. The question must be posed in its essence, that is, on the plane of trade union *policy*. A correct policy must be opposed to a wrong policy.

The Character of the Party's Leadership Depends upon Specific Conditions

12. The character of the party's direction, its methods and its forms, can differ profoundly in accordance with the general conditions of a given country or with the period of its development.

In capitalist countries, where the Communist party does not possess any means of coercion, it is obvious that it can give the leadership only by the Communists being in the trade unions as rank and file members or functionaries.

The number of Communists in leading posts of the trade unions is only one of the means of measuring the rôle of the party in the trade unions. The most important measurement is the percentage of rank and file Communists in relation to the whole unionized mass. But the principal criterion is the general influence of the party on the working class, which is measured by the circulation of the Communist press, the attendance at meetings of the party, the number of votes at elections and, what is especially important, the number of workingmen and women who respond actively to the party's appeals to struggle.

13. It is clear that the influence of the Communist party in general, including the trade unions, will grow, the more revolutionary the situation becomes.

These conditions permit an appreciation of the degree and the form of the true, real and not the metaphysical autonomy of the trade unions. In times of "peace", when the most militant forms of trade union action are isolated economic strikes, the *direct* part of the party in

trade union action falls back to second place. As a general rule, the party does not make a decision on every isolated strike. It *helps* the trade union to decide the question of knowing if the strike is opportune, by means of its political and economic information and by its advice. It *serves* the strike with its agitation, etc. First place in the strike belongs, of course, to the trade union.

The situation changes radically when the movement rises to the general strike and still more to the direct struggle for power. In these conditions, the leading rôle of the party becomes entirely direct, open and immediate. The trade unions—naturally, not those that pass over to the other side of the barricades—become the organizational apparatus of the party which, in the presence of the whole class, stands forth as the leader of the revolution, bearing the full responsibility.

In the field extending between the partial economic strike and the revolutionary class insurrection, are placed all the possible forms of reciprocal relations between the party and the trade unions, the varying degrees of direct and immediate leadership, etc.

But under all conditions, the party seeks to win general leadership by relying upon the real autonomy of the trade unions which, as organizations—it goes without saying—are not “submitted” to it.

T H E P O L I T I C A L I N D E P E N D E N C E O F T H E T R A D E U N I O N S I S A M Y T H

14. Facts show that politically “independent” trade unions do not exist anywhere. There have never been any. Experience and theory say that there never will be any. In the United States, the trade unions are directly bound by their apparatus to the general staffs of industry and the bourgeois parties. In England, the trade unions which, in the past, mainly supported the liberals, now constitute

the material basis of the Labor Party. In Germany, the trade unions march under the banner of the social democracy. In the Soviet republic, their leadership belongs to the Bolsheviks. In France, one of the trade union organizations follows the socialists, the other the Communists. In Finland, the trade unions were divided only a little while ago, to go one towards the social democracy, the other towards Communism. That is how it is everywhere.

The theoreticians of the "independence" of the trade union movement have not taken the trouble up to now to think of why their slogan not only does not approach its realization in practise anywhere, but on the contrary, the dependence of the trade unions upon the leadership of a party becomes everywhere, without exception, more and more evident and open. Yet, this corresponds entirely to the character of the imperialist epoch, which bares all class relations and which, even within the proletariat, accentuates the contradictions between its aristocracy and its most exploited sections.

The Syndicalist League, Embryo of a Party

15. The consummate expression of outdated syndicalism is the so-called Syndicalist League [*Ligue Syndicaliste*]. By all its traits, it comes forward as a political organization which seeks to subordinate the trade union movement to its influence. In fact, the League recruits its members not in accordance with the trade union principle, but in accordance with the principle of political groupings: it has its platform, if not its program, and it defends it in its publications; it has its own internal discipline within the trade union movement. In the congresses of the Confederations, its partisans act as a political faction in the same way as the Communist faction. If we are not to lose ourselves in words, the tendency of the Syndicalist League re-

duces itself to a struggle to liberate the two Confederations from the leadership of the socialists and Communists and to unite them under the direction of the Monatte group.

The League does not act openly in the name of the right and the necessity, for the advanced minority, to fight to extend its influence over the most backward masses; it presents itself masked by what it calls trade union "independence". From this point of view, the League approaches the socialist party which also realizes its leadership under cover of the phrase: "Independence of the trade union movement." The Communist party, on the contrary, says openly to the working class: Here is my program, my tactics and my policy, which I propose to the trade unions.

The proletariat must never believe anything blindly. It must judge every party and every organization by its work. But the workers should have a double and treble distrust towards those pretenders to leadership who act *incognito*, under a mask, who make the proletariat believe that it has no need of leadership in general.

The Proletariat Does Not Require the "Autonomy" of the Trade Unions But a Correct Leadership

16. The right of a political party to fight to win the trade unions to its influence must not be denied, but this question must be posed: In the name of what program and what tactics is this organization fighting? From this point of view, the Syndicalist League does not give the necessary guarantees. Its program is extremely amorphous, as are its tactics. In its political evaluations, it acts only from event to event. Acknowledging the proletarian revolution and even the dictatorship of the proletariat, it ignores the party and fights against Communist leadership without which the proletarian revolution would always risk remaining a phrase devoid of sense.

17. The ideology of trade union independence has nothing in common with the ideas and sentiments of the proletariat as a class. If the party, by its direction, is capable of assuring a correct, clear-sighted and firm policy in the trade unions, not a single worker will have the idea of rebelling against the leadership of the party. The historical experience of the Bolsheviks has proved that.

This also holds good for France, where the Communists received 1,200,000 votes in the elections while the *Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire* [the central organization of the Red trade unions] has only a fourth or a third of this number. It is clear that the abstract slogan of independence can under no condition come from the masses. Trade union bureaucracy is quite another thing. It not only sees professional competition in the party bureaucracy, but it even tends to make itself independent of control by the vanguard of the proletariat. The slogan of independence is, by its very basis, a bureaucratic and not a class slogan.

The Fetish of Trade Union Unity

18. After the fetish of "independence" the Syndicalist League also transforms the question of *trade union unity* into a fetish.

It goes without saying that the maintenance of the unity of the trade union organizations has enormous advantages, from the point of view of the daily tasks of the proletariat as well as from the point of view of the struggle of the Communist party to extend its influence over the masses. But the facts prove that since the first successes of the revolutionary wing in the trade unions, the opportunists have set themselves deliberately on the road of split. Peaceful relations with the bourgeoisie are dearer to them than the unity of the proletariat. That is the indubitable summary of the post-war experiences.

We Communists are in every way interested in proving to the workers that the responsibility for the splitting of the trade union organizations falls wholly upon the social democracy. But it does not at all follow that the hollow formula of unity is more important for us than the revolutionary tasks of the working class.

19. Eight years have passed since the trade union split in France. During this time, the two organizations linked themselves definitely with the two mortally hostile political parties. Under these conditions, to think of being able to unify the trade union movement by the simple preaching of unity would be to nurture illusions. To declare that without the preliminary unification of the two trade union organizations not only the proletarian revolution but even a serious class struggle is impossible, means to make the future of the revolution depend upon the corrupted clique of trade union reformists.

In fact, the future of the revolution depends not upon the fusion of the two trade union apparatuses, but the unification of the majority of the working class around revolutionary slogans and revolutionary methods of struggle.

At present, the unification of the working class is only possible by fighting against the class collaborationists (coalitionists) who are found not only in political parties but also in the trade unions.

20. The real road to the revolutionary unity of the proletariat lies in the development, the correction, the enlargement and consolidation of the revolutionary C. G. T. U. and in the weakening of the reformist C. G. T.

It is not excluded but, on the contrary, very likely, that at the time of its revolution, the French proletariat will enter the struggle with two Confederations: behind one will be found the masses and behind the other the aristocracy of labor and the bureaucracy.

The Character of the Trade Union Opposition

21. The new trade union opposition obviously does not want to enter on the road of syndicalism. At the same time, it breaks with the party—not with a certain leadership, but with the party in general. This means quite simply that ideologically, it definitely disarms itself and falls back to the positions of craft or trade unionism.

22. The trade union opposition as a whole is very variegated. But it is characterized by some common features which do not bring it closer to the Left Communist Opposition but, on the contrary, alienate it and oppose it.

The trade union opposition does not fight against the thoughtless acts and wrong methods of the Communist leadership, but against the influence of Communism over the working class.

The trade union opposition does not fight against the ultra-Leftist evaluation of the given situation and the tempo of its development but acts, in reality, counter to revolutionary perspectives in general.

The trade union opposition does not fight against caricatured methods of anti-militarism but puts forward a pacifist orientation. In other words, the trade union opposition is manifestly developing in the reformist spirit.

23. It is entirely wrong to affirm that in these recent years—contrary to what has happened in Germany, Czechoslovakia, and other countries—there has not been constituted in France a Right wing grouping in the revolutionary camp. The main point is that, forsaking the revolutionary policy of Communism, the Right opposition in France, in conformity with the traditions of the French labor movement, has assumed a trade union character, concealing in this way its political physiognomy. At bottom, the majority of the trade union opposition represents the Right wing just as the Brandler group in Germany, the Czech trade union-

ists who, after the split, have taken a clearly reformist position, etc.

The Policy of the Communist Party

24. One may seek to object that all the preceding considerations would be correct only on condition that the Communist party has a correct policy. But this objection is unfounded. The question of the relationships between the party, which represents the proletariat as it should be, and the trade unions, which represent the proletariat as it is, is the most fundamental question of revolutionary Marxism. It would be veritable suicide to spurn the only possible principled reply to this question solely because the Communist party, under the influence of objective and subjective reasons of which we have spoken more than once, is now conducting a false policy towards the trade unions, as well as in other fields. A correct policy must be opposed to a wrong policy. Towards this end, the Left Opposition has been constituted as a faction. If it is considered that the French Communist Party in its entirety is in a wholly irremediable or hopeless state—which we absolutely do not think—another party must be opposed to it. But the question of the relation of the party to the class does not change one iota by this fact.

The Left Opposition considers that to influence the trade union movement, to help it find its correct orientation, to permeate it with correct slogans, is impossible except through the Communist party (or a faction for the moment) which, besides its other attributes, is the central ideological laboratory of the working class.

25. The correctly understood task of the Communist party does not consist solely of gaining influence over the trade unions, such as they are, but in winning, through the trade unions, an influence over the majority of the working class. This is possible only if the methods employed by

the party in the trade unions correspond to the nature and the tasks of the latter. The struggle for influence of the party in the trade unions finds its objective verification in the fact that they do or do not thrive, and in the fact that the number of their members increases, as well as in their relations with the broadest masses. If the party buys its influence in the trade unions only at the price of a narrowing down and a factionalizing of the latter—converting them into auxiliaries of the party for momentary aims and preventing them from becoming genuine mass organizations—the relations between the party and the class are wrong. It is not necessary for us to dwell here on the causes for such a situation. We have done it more than once and we do it every day. The changeability of the official Communist policy reflects its adventurist tendency to make itself master of the working class in the briefest time, by means of stage-play, inventions, superficial agitation, etc.

The way out of this situation does not, however, lie in opposing the trade unions to the party (or to the faction) but in the irreconcilable struggle to change the whole policy of the party as well as that of the trade unions.

The Task of the Communist Left

26. The Left Opposition must place the questions of the trade union movement in indissoluble connection with the questions of the political struggle of the proletariat. It must give a concrete analysis of the present stage of development of the French labor movement. It must give an evaluation, quantitative as well as qualitative, of the present strike movement and its perspectives in relation to the perspectives of the economic development of France. It is needless to say that it completely rejects the perspective of capitalist stabilization and pacifism for decades. It proceeds from an estimation of our epoch as a revolutionary one. It springs from the necessity of a timely prep-

aration of the vanguard proletariat in face of the abrupt turns which are not only probable but inevitable. The firmer and more implacable is its action against the supposedly revolutionary rantings of the Centrist bureaucracy, against political hysteria which does not take conditions into account, which confuses today with yesterday or with tomorrow, the more firmly and resolutely must it set itself against the elements of the Right that take up its criticism and conceal themselves under it in order to introduce their tendencies into revolutionary Marxism.

* * *

27. A new definition of boundaries? New polemics? New splits? That will be the lament of the good but tired souls, who would like to transform the Opposition into a calm retreat where one can tranquilly rest from the great tasks, while preserving intact the name of revolutionist "of the Left". No! we say to them, to these tired souls: we are certainly not traveling the same road. Truth has never yet been the sum of small errors. A revolutionary organization has never yet been composed of small conservative groups, seeking primarily to distinguish themselves from each other. There are epochs when the revolutionary tendency is reduced to a small minority in the labor movement. But those epochs demand not arrangements between the small groups with mutual hiding of sins, but on the contrary, a doubly implacable struggle for a correct perspective and an education of the cadres in the spirit of genuine Marxism. Victory is possible only in this way.

28. So far as the author of these lines is personally concerned, he must admit that the notion he had of the Monatte group when he was deported from the Soviet Union proved to be too optimistic and, by that fact, false. For many years, the author did not have the possibility of following the activity of this group. He judged it from old memories. The divergences showed themselves in fact not only profounder, but even more acute than one might have supposed. The events of these recent times have proved

beyond a doubt that without a clear and precise ideological demarcation from the line of syndicalism, the Communist Opposition in France will not go forward. The theses proposed represent by themselves the first step on the road of this demarcation which is the prelude to the successful struggle against the revolutionary jabberings and the opportunist essence of Cachin, Monmousseau and Company.
October 14, 1929

The Errors in Principle of Syndicalism

To Serve in the Discussion with Monatte and his Friends

WHEN I arrived in France in October 1914, I found the French socialist and trade union movement in a state of the deepest chauvinist demoralization. In the search for revolutionists, with candle in hand, I made the acquaintance of Monatte and Rosmer. They had not succumbed to chauvinism. It was thus that our friendship began. Monatte considered himself an anarcho-syndicalist; despite that he was immeasurably closer to me than the French Guèsdists who were playing a pitiful and shameful rôle. At that time, the Cachins were making themselves familiar with the servants' entrance to the ministries of the Third Republic and the Allied embassies. In 1915, Monatte left the central committee of the C. G. T., slamming the door behind him. His departure from the trade union center was in essence nothing but a split. At that time, however, Monatte believed—and rightly so—that the fundamental historical tasks of the proletariat stood above unity with chauvinists and lackeys of imperialism. It was in this

that Monatte was loyal to the best traditions of revolutionary syndicalism.

Monatte was one of the first friends of the October revolution. True, unlike Rosmer, he had held aloof for a long time. That was well in keeping with the character of Monatte, as I was later convinced, of standing aside, of waiting, of criticizing. At times this is absolutely unavoidable. But as a *basic* line of conduct, it becomes converted into sectarianism which has a close affinity to Proudhonism, but nothing in common with Marxism.

When the socialist party of France became the Communist party, I frequently had occasion to discuss with Lenin the onerous heritage the International had received in the person of leaders like Cachin, Frossard and other heroes of the League of the Rights of Man, of the Freemasons, of parliamentarians, careerists and babblers. One of these conversations—if I am not mistaken I have already published it in the press—follows:

"It would be good," Lenin said to me, "to drive out all these weathercocks, and to draw into the party the revolutionary syndicalists, the militant workers, people who are really devoted to the cause of the working class . . . And Monatte? . . ."

"Monatte would of course be ten times better than Cachin and those like him," I replied. "But Monatte not only continues to reject parliamentarism but to this day he has not grasped the significance of the party."

Lenin was astonished: "Impossible! Has not grasped the significance of the party after the October revolution? That's a very dangerous symptom."

I carried on a correspondence with Monatte in which I invited him to Moscow. He was evasive. True to his nature, he preferred in this case too to stand aside and wait. And besides, the Communist party did not suit him. In that he was right. But instead of helping to transform it, he waited. At the Fourth Congress we succeeded in taking the first steps towards cleansing the Communist

Party of France of Freemasons, pacifists and office-seekers. Monatte entered the party. But it is not necessary to emphasize the fact that this did not mean to us that he had adopted the Marxian viewpoint; not at all. On March 23, 1923, I wrote in PRAVDA: "The entrance of our old friend, Monatte, into the party was a great day for us; men of his stamp are necessary to the revolution. But it certainly would be wrong to pay the price of confusion and lack of clarity in ideas for this *rapprochement*." In this article, I criticized the scholasticism of Louzon on the relations between the class, the trade unions and the party. In particular, I explained that pre-war syndicalism had been an embryo of the Communist party, that this embryo had since become a child, and that if this child was suffering from measles and rickets, it was necessary to nourish and cure it, but that it would be absurd to imagine that it could be made to return to its mother's womb. I may perhaps be permitted to say in this regard that the arguments of my 1923 article, in caricature, serve to this day as the main weapons against Monatte in the hands of Monmousseau and the other anti-Trotskyist warriors.

Monatte joined the party; but he hardly had time to turn about and accustom himself to a house far vaster than his little shop on the *quai de Jemappes* when the *coup d'État* burst upon him: Lenin was taken ill, the campaign against "Trotskyism" and the Zinovievist "Bolshevization" began. Monatte could not submit to the careerists who, by leaning upon the general staff of the epigones at Moscow, and disposing of unlimited resources, carried on by means of intrigue and slander. Monatte was expelled from the party. This episode, important but still only an episode, was of decisive moment in the political development of Monatte. He decided that his brief experience in the party had fully confirmed his anarcho-syndicalist prejudices against the party in general. Monatte then began insistently to retrace his steps towards abandoned positions. He began to seek again the Amiens Charter*. For all that

he had to turn his face to the past. The experience of the war, of the Russian revolution, and of the world trade union movement were lost upon him, leaving hardly a trace. Once again Monatte stood aside and waited. What for? A new Amiens Congress. During these last few years I was unfortunately unable to follow the retrogressive evolution of Monatte: the Russian Opposition lived in a blockaded circle.

Out of the whole treasure of the theory and practise of the world struggle of the proletariat, Monatte has extracted but two ideas: *trade union autonomy* and *trade union unity*. He has elevated these two pure principles above sinful reality. It is on trade union unity that he has based his paper and the Syndicalist League. Unfortunately, these two ideas are hollow and each of them resembles the hole in a ring. Whether the ring be made of iron, silver or gold, Monatte does not care in the least. The ring, you see, always hampers the trade union's activity. Monatte is interested only in the hole of autonomy.

No less empty is the other sacred principle: *unity*. In its name, Monatte even stood out against the rupture of the Anglo-Russian Committee, even though the General Council of the British trade unions had betrayed the general strike. The fact that Stalin, Bucharin, Cachin, Monmousseau and others supported the bloc with the strike-breakers until the latter kicked them off, does not in the least reduce Monatte's mistake. After my arrival abroad, I made an attempt to explain to the readers of *LA RÉVOLUTION PROLÉTARIENNE* the criminal character of this bloc, the consequences of which are still being felt by the workers' movement. Monatte did not want to publish my arti-

* A charter adopted under the influence of syndicalists at the congress of the General Confederation of Labor in 1906, at Amiens, which set the trade union movement above all political groups or parties, and demanded the complete autonomy and absolute independence of the trade unions.—Tr.

cle. And how could it have been otherwise, since I had made an assault upon the sacred trade union unity, which solves all questions and reconciles all contradictions? . . .

When strikers encounter a group of strike-breakers in their path, they throw them out of their midst without sparing blows. If the strike-breakers are union men, they throw them out immediately, without worrying about the sacred principles of trade union unity. Monatte surely has no objections to this. But the matter is entirely different when it is a question of the trade union bureaucracy and its leaders. The General Council is not composed of starving and backward strike-breakers; no, they are well-fed and experienced traitors, who found it necessary at a certain moment to stand at the head of the general strike in order to decapitate it all the more quickly and surely. They worked hand in hand with the government, the bosses and the princes of the church. It would seem that the leaders of the Russian trade unions, who were in a political bloc with the General Council, should have immediately, openly and relentlessly broken with it at that very moment, before the masses it deceived and betrayed. But Monatte rises up fiercely: It is forbidden to disturb trade union unity. In an astonishing manner, he forgets that he himself upset this unity in 1915 by leaving the chauvinist General Council of the *Confédération Générale du Travail*.

It must be said outright: Between the Monatte of 1915 and the Monatte of 1929, there is an abyss. To Monatte it seems that he is remaining entirely faithful to himself. Formally, this is true, up to a certain point. Monatte repeats a few old formulæ, but he ignores entirely the experiences of the last fifteen years, richer in lessons than all the preceding history of humanity. In the attempt to return to his former positions, Monatte fails to notice that they have disappeared a long time ago. No matter what question is raised, Monatte looks backward. This may be seen most clearly in the question of the party and the state.

Some time ago, Monatte accused me of underrating

the "dangers" of state power (LA RÉVOLUTION PROLÉTARIENNE, No. 79, May 1, 1929, page 2). This reproach is not a new one; it has its origin in the struggle of Bakunin against Marx and it shows a false, contradictory and essentially non-proletarian conception of the state.

With the exception of one country, state power throughout the world is in the hands of the bourgeoisie. *It is in this, and only in this, that, from the point of view of the proletariat, the state danger lies.* Its historical task is to wrest this most powerful instrument of oppression from the hands of the bourgeoisie. The Communists do not deny the difficulties, the dangers that are connected with the dictatorship of the proletariat. But can this lessen by one iota the necessity to seize power? If the whole proletariat were carried by an irresistible force to the conquest of power, or if it had already conquered it, one could, strictly speaking, understand this or that warning of the syndicalists. Lenin, as is known, warned in his testament against the abuse of revolutionary power. The struggle against the distortions of the dictatorship of the proletariat has been conducted by the Opposition since its inception and without the need of borrowing from the arsenal of anarchism.

But in the bourgeois countries, the misfortune lies in the fact that the overwhelming majority of the proletariat does not understand as it should the dangers of the *bourgeois state*. By the manner in which they treat the question, the syndicalists, naturally against their intentions, contribute to the passive conciliation of the workers with the capitalist state. When the syndicalists chant to the workers oppressed by the bourgeois power their admonitions against the "dangers" of the state for the proletariat, they play a purely reactionary rôle. The bourgeois will readily repeat to the workers: "Do not touch the state because it is a snare full of dangers to you." The Communist will say to the workers: "The difficulties and dangers with which the proletariat is confronted the day after the con-

quest of power—we will learn to overcome them on the basis of experience. But at the present time, the most menacing dangers lie in the fact that our class enemy holds the reins of power in its hands and directs it against us.”

In contemporary society, there are only two classes capable of holding power in their hands: the capitalist bourgeoisie and the revolutionary proletariat. The petty bourgeoisie has long ago lost the economic possibility of directing the destinies of modern society. Now and then, in fits of desperation, it rises for the conquest of power, even with arms in hand, as has happened in Italy, in Poland and other countries. But the Fascist insurrections only end in this result: the new power becomes the instrument of finance capital under an even more naked and brutal form. That is why the most representative ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie are afraid of state power as such. The petty bourgeoisie fears power when it is in the hands of the big bourgeoisie, because the latter strangles and ruins it. It also fears it when it is in the hands of the proletariat, for the latter undermines all the conditions of its habitual existence. Finally, it fears power when it falls into its own hands because it must inevitably pass out of its impotent hands into those of finance capital or the proletariat. That is why the anarchists do not see the revolutionary problems of state power, its historical rôle, and see only the “dangers” of state power. The anti-state anarchists are consequently the most logical, and for that reason, the most hopeless representatives of the petty bourgeoisie in its blind alley.

Yes, the dangers of state power exist under the régime of the dictatorship of the proletariat as well, but the substance of these dangers consists of the fact that power can actually return to the hands of the bourgeoisie. The best known and most obvious state danger is *bureaucratism*. But what is its essence? If the enlightened workers' bureaucracy could lead society to socialism, that is, to the liquidation of the state, we would be reconciled to such a

bureaucracy. But it has an entirely opposite *character*: by separating itself from the proletariat, by raising itself above it, the bureaucracy falls under the influence of the petty bourgeois classes and can by that very fact facilitate the return of power into the hands of the bourgeoisie. In other words, the state dangers for the workers under the dictatorship of the proletariat are, in the final analysis, nothing but the danger of restoring the power to the bourgeoisie.

The question of the *source* of this bureaucratic danger is no less important. It would be radically wrong to think, to imagine, that bureaucratism rises exclusively from the fact of the conquest of power by the proletariat. No, that is not the case. In the capitalist states, the most monstrous forms of bureaucratism are to be observed precisely in the trade unions. It is enough to look at America, England and Germany. Amsterdam is the most powerful international organization of the trade union bureaucracy. It is thanks to it that the whole structure of capitalism now stands upright, above all in Europe and especially in England. If there were not a bureaucracy of the trade unions, then the police, the army, the courts, the lords, the monarchy would appear before the proletarian masses as nothing but pitiful and ridiculous playthings. The bureaucracy of the trade unions is the backbone of British imperialism. It is by means of this bureaucracy that the bourgeoisie exists, not only in the metropolis, but in India, in Egypt and in the other colonies. One would have to be completely blind to say to the English workers: "Be on guard against the conquest of power and always remember that your trade unions are the antidote to the dangers of the state." The Marxist will say to the English workers: "The trade union bureaucracy is the chief instrument for your oppression by the bourgeois state. Power must be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie and for that its principal agent, the trade union bureaucracy, must be overthrown." Parenthetically, it is especially for this

reason that the bloc of Stalin with the strike-breakers was so criminal.

From the example of England, one sees very clearly how absurd it is to oppose trade union organization and state organization as two different principles. In England, more than anywhere else, the state rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population of the country. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based *directly* on the workers, and the state indirectly, *through the intermediary* of the trade union bureaucracy.

Up to now, we have not mentioned the Labor party which, in England, the classic country of the trade unions, is only a political transposition of the same trade union bureaucracy. The same leaders guide the trade unions, betray the general strike, lead the electoral campaign and later on sit in the ministries. The Labor party and the trade unions—these are not two principles, they are only a technical division of labor. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Laborite bureaucracy. And that cannot be attained by opposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but by the active opposition of the Communist party to the Laborite bureaucracy in all fields of social life: in the trade unions, in strikes, in the electoral campaign, in parliament and in power. The principal task of a real party of the proletariat consists of putting itself at the head of the working masses, organized in trade unions and unorganized, to wrest power from the bourgeoisie and to strike a death-blow to the “dangers of state-ism”.

CONSTANTINOPLE, *October 1929*

Monatte Crosses the Rubicon

IT IS NOW ridiculous and out of place to speak of joint action with the Syndicalist League or the Committee for the Independence of Trade Unionism. Monatte has crossed the Rubicon. He has lined up with Dumoulin against Communism, against the October revolution, against the proletarian revolution in general. For Dumoulin belongs to the camp of the especially dangerous and perfidious enemies of the proletarian revolution. He has demonstrated it in action, in the most repugnant manner. For a long time he has prowled around the Left wing only to rally at the decisive moment to Jouhaux, that is, to the most servile and most corrupt agent of capital. The task of the honest revolutionist, above all in France where unpunished betrayals are innumerable, consists of reminding the workers of the experiences of the past, of tempering the youth in intransigence, or recounting tirelessly the history of the betrayal of the Second International and of French syndicalism, of unmasking the shameful rôle played not only by Jouhaux and Company, but above all by the French syndicalists of the "Left", like Merrheim and Dumoulin. Whoever does not carry out this elementary task towards the new generation deprives himself forever of the right to revolutionary confidence. Can one, for instance, preserve a shadow of esteem for the toothless French anarchists when they again play up as an "anti-militarist" the old buffoon Sébastien Faure who trafficked with pacifist phrases during the peace and flung himself into the arms of Malvy, that is, of the French Bourse, at the beginning of the war?

Whoever seeks to drape these facts in the toga of oblivion, who grants amnesty to political traitors, can only be considered by us an incorrigible enemy.

Monatte has crossed the Rubicon. From the uncertain ally he has become, first, the hesitant foe in order to become, later on, the direct enemy. We must say this to the workers clearly, aloud and unsparingly.

To simple people and also to some knaves who put on a simple air, our judgment may appear exaggerated and "unjust". For Monatte is uniting with Dumoulin *solely* for the re-establishment of the unity of the "trade union" movement! Solely! The trade unions, you see, are not a party, nor a "sect". The trade unions, you see, must embrace the whole working class, all its tendencies; one can therefore work in the trade union field by Dumoulin's side without taking responsibility either for his past or for his future. Reflections of this sort constitute a chain of those cheap sophisms with which the French syndicalists and socialists love to juggle when they want to cover up a not very odorous job.

If there existed in France united trade unions, the revolutionists would obviously not have left the organizations because of the presence of traitors, of turncoats and the licensed agents of imperialism. The revolutionists would not have taken upon themselves the initiative for the split. But in joining or in remaining in these trade unions, they would have directed all their efforts *to unmask the traitors before the masses as traitors*, in order to discredit them on the basis of the experience of the masses, to isolate them, to deprive them of the confidence they enjoy, and in the end, to help the masses run them out. That alone can justify the participation of revolutionists in the reformist trade unions.

But Monatte does not at all work side by side with Dumoulin within the trade unions, as the Bolsheviks frequently had to with the Mensheviks, while conducting a systematic struggle against them. No, *Monatte has united*

with Dumoulin as an ally on a common platform, creating with him a political faction or a "sect" expressing itself in the language of French syndicalism in order later on to lead a political crusade for the conquest of the trade union movement. Monatte does not fight against the traitors on the trade union field, on the contrary, he has associated himself with Dumoulin and takes him under his wing, presenting himself to the masses as his tutor. Monatte says to the workers that one can go hand in hand with Dumoulin against the Communists, against the Red International of Labor Unions, against the October revolution, and consequently, against the proletarian revolution in general. This is the unvarnished truth which we must speak aloud to the workers.

When we once defined Monatte as a *Centrist slipping towards the Right*, Chambelland sought to transform this entirely correct scientific definition into a feuilleton joke and even to throw back this designation of Centrist upon us, as the soccer player returns the ball with a lunge of his head. Alas, the head sometimes suffers for it! Yes, Monatte was a Centrist and in his Centrism were contained all the elements of his manifest opportunism of today.

A propos of the execution of the Indo-Chinese revolutionists in the spring of this year, Monatte developed the following plan of action in an indirect manner:

"I do not understand why, in such circumstances, the parties and organizations disposing of the necessary means, do not send deputies and journalists to investigate on the very spot. Out of the dozen deputies of the Communist party, and out of the hundred of the Socialist party, could they not select an investigation commission which would be charged with the elements of a campaign capable of making the colonists retreat and of saving the condemned?"
(LA RÉVOLUTION PROLÉTARIENNE, No. 104.)

With the imperious reproaches of a school monitor, Monatte gave the Communists and the social democrats

advice on the manner of fighting against the "colonialists". The social-patriots and the Communists, for him, were six months ago people of *the same camp* who had only to follow Monatte's advice in order to carry out a correct policy. For Monatte there did not even exist the question of knowing in what way the social-patriots can fight against the "colonialists", when they are the partisans and the practical executors of the colonial policy. For can colonies, that is, nations, tribes, races, be governed without shooting down the rebels, the revolutionists who seek to liberate themselves from the repulsive colonial yoke? Messieurs Zyromsky and kin are not opposed to presenting upon every propitious occasion a drawing room protest against colonial "bestiality"; but that does not prevent them from belonging to the social-colonialist party which harnessed the French proletariat to a chauvinistic course during the war, one of whose principal aims was to preserve and extend the colonies to the profit of the French bourgeoisie. Monatte has forgotten all this. He reasoned as if there had not been, after this, great revolutionary events in a number of Western and Oriental countries, as if different tendencies had not been revised in action and made clear by experience. Six months ago, Monatte pretended to start all over again. And during this time, history again made game of him. MacDonald, the co-religionist of the French syndicalists, to whom Louzon recently gave some incomparable advice, sends to India not liberating commissions of investigation but armed forces, and comes to grips with the Hindus in a more repulsive manner than would any Curzon. And all the scoundrels of British trade unionism approve this butcher's work. Is it by chance?

Instead of turning away, under the influence of the new lesson, from hypocritical "neutrality" and "independence", Monatte, on the contrary, has taken a new step, this time a decisive one, into the arms of the French MacDonalds and Thomases. We have nothing more to discuss with Monatte.

The bloc of the "independent" syndicalists with the avowed agents of the bourgeoisie has a great symptomatic significance. In the eyes of philistines, things seem as though the representatives of both camps had taken a step towards each other in the name of unity, of the cessation of the fratricidal struggle, and other sweet phrases. There can be nothing more disgusting, more false, than this phraseology. In reality, the meaning of the bloc is entirely different.

In the various circles of the labor bureaucracy and also in part in circles of the workers themselves, Monatte represents those elements who sought to approach the revolution but who lost hope in it through the experience of the last ten or twelve years. Don't you see that it develops by such complicated and perplexing roads, that it leads to internal conflicts, to ever new splits, that after a step forward it takes a half step and sometimes a full step backward? The years of bourgeois stabilization, the years of the revolutionary reflux, have heaped up despair, fatigue, and opportunist moods in a certain part of the working class. All these sentiments have only now matured in the Monatte group and have driven it to pass finally from one camp to the other. On the way, Monatte met with Louis Sellier, who had his own reasons for turning his back, covered with municipal honors, to the revolution. Monatte and Sellier have quit together. To their meeting, there came no less a one than Dumoulin. This means that at the moment when Monatte shifted from Left to Right, Dumoulin judged it opportune to shift from Right to Left. How is this to be explained? It is because Monatte, as an empiricist—and the Centrists are always empiricists, otherwise they would not be Centrists—has expressed his sentiments on the stabilization period at a moment when this period *has begun to be transformed into another, much less tranquil and much less stable.*

The world crisis has taken on a gigantic stature and for the moment it is becoming deeper. Nobody can pre-

dict where it will stop or what political consequences it will bring in its train. The situation in Germany is extremely strained. The German elections produced acute elements of disturbance, not only in internal relations but also in international relations, showing again on what foundation the edifice of Versailles rests. The economic crisis has inundated the frontiers of France, and we already see there, after a long interlude, the beginnings of unemployment. During the years of relative prosperity, the French workers suffered from the policy of the confederal bureaucracy. During the years of crisis, they can remind it of its betrayals and its crimes. Jouhaux cannot but be uneasy. He necessarily requires a Left wing, perhaps more necessarily than Blum. What purpose then does Dumoulin serve? Obviously it must not be thought that everything is arranged like the notes of a piano and has been formulated in a conversation. That is not necessary. All these people know each other, they know what they are capable of and especially the limits to which one of them can go to the Left, with impunity for himself and his bosses. (The fact that the confederal bureaucracy preserves a watchful and critical attitude towards Dumoulin, sometimes even with a nuance of hostility, in no way invalidates what is said above. The reformists must take their measures of precaution and keep an eye upon Dumoulin so that he does not let himself be involved in the work with which the reformists have charged him and does not exceed the limits marked out.)

Dumoulin takes his place in the line of march as the Left wing of Jouhaux at the very moment when Monatte, who has shifted constantly to the Right, has decided to cross the Rubicon. Dumoulin must establish at least a little of his reputation—with the aid of Monatte and at his expense. Jouhaux can have no objection when his own Dumoulin compromises Monatte. In this way, everything is in order: Monatte has broken with the Left camp at the

moment when the confederal bureaucracy has felt the necessity of covering up its uncovered Left flank.

We are analyzing this personal shift not for Monatte, who was once our friend, and certainly not for Dumoulin, whom we long ago judged as an irreconcilable enemy. What interests us is the *symptomatic* significance of these personal regroupings, which reflect far more profound processes in the working masses themselves.

This radicalization which the clamorers proclaimed two years ago is indisputably approaching today. The economic crisis has arrived in France, after a delay, it is true; it is not impossible that it will unfold in a mild manner compared with Germany. Experience alone can establish this. But it is indisputable that the poised passivity in which the French working class existed in the years of the so-called "radicalization" will give way in a very brief time to a growing activity and a spirit of militancy. It is towards this new period that the revolutionists must turn.

On the threshold of the new period, Monatte gathers up the fatigued, the disillusioned, the exhausted, and makes them pass into the camp of Jouhaux. So much the worse for Monatte, so much the better for the revolution!

The period opening before us will not be a period of the growth of the false neutrality of the trade unions but, on the contrary, the period of the reinforcement of the Communist positions in the labor movement. Great tasks present themselves to the Left Opposition. With sure successes awaiting it, what must it do to gain them? Nothing but *remain faithful to itself*.

But on this point, the next time.

PRINKIPO, December 15, 1930

The Mistakes of the Right Elements of the League in the Trade Union Question

Some Preliminary Remarks

1. IF THE theoretical structure of the political economy of Marxism rests entirely upon the conception of *value* as materialized labor, the revolutionary policy of Marxism rests upon the conception of the *party* as the vanguard of the proletariat.

Whatever may be the social sources and political causes of opportunistic mistakes and deviations, they are always reduced ideologically to an erroneous understanding of the revolutionary party, of its relation to other proletarian organizations and to the class as a whole.

2. The conception of the party as the proletarian vanguard presupposes its full and unconditional independence from all other organizations. The various agreements (blocs, coalitions, compromises) with other organizations, unavoidable in the course of the class struggle, are permissible only on the condition that the party always turns its own face towards the class, marches under its own banner, acts in its own name, and explains openly to the masses the aims and limits within which it concludes the given agreement.

3. At the basis of all the oscillations and all the errors of the Comintern leadership, we find the wrong understanding of the nature of the party and its tasks. The Stalinist theory of a "two-class party" contradicts the

A B C of Marxism. The fact that the official Communist International has tolerated this theory for a number of years and to this day has not yet condemned it with the necessary firmness is the most unmistakable sign of the falsity of its official doctrine.

4. The fundamental crime of the Centrist bureaucracy in the U. S. S. R. is the false relationship to the party. The Stalinist faction seeks to include administratively into the ranks of the party the whole working class. The party ceases to be the vanguard, that is, the voluntary selection of the most advanced, the most conscious, the most devoted, and the most active workers. The party is fused with the class as it is and loses its power of resistance to the bureaucratic apparatus. On the other hand, the Brandlerites and the other hangers-on of the Centrist bureaucracy justify the Stalinist party régime by the philistine reference to the "lack of culture" of the Russian proletariat, thus identifying the party and the class, that is, liquidating the party in theory as Stalin liquidates it in practise.

5. The basis of the disastrous policy of the Comintern in China was the renunciation of the independence of the party. Practical agreements with the Kuo Min Tang were unavoidable in a certain period. The entrance of the Communist party into the Kuo Min Tang was a fatal error. The development of this mistake was transformed into one of the greatest crimes in history. The Chinese Communist Party was created only in order to transfer its authority to the Kuo Min Tang. From the vanguard of the proletariat, it was transformed into the tail of the bourgeoisie.

6. The disastrous experiment with the Anglo-Russian Committee was based entirely upon trampling under foot the independence of the British Communist Party. In order that the Soviet trade unions might maintain the bloc with the strike-breakers of the General Council (allegedly in the state interests of the U. S. S. R.!), the British Com-

munist Party had to be deprived of all independence. This was obtained by the actual dissolution of the party into the so-called "minority movement", that is, the Left opposition inside the trade unions.

7. The experience of the Anglo-Russian Committee was unfortunately the least understood and grasped even in the Left Opposition groups. The demands for a break with the strike-breakers appeared even to some within our ranks as . . . sectarianism. Especially with Monatte, the original sin which led him into the arms of Dumoulin, was most clearly manifested in the question of the Anglo-Russian Committee. Yet, this question has a gigantic importance: without a clear understanding of what happened in England in 1925-1926, neither Communism as a whole nor the Left Opposition in particular will be able to enter upon a broad road.

8. Stalin, Bucharin, Zinoviev—in this question they were all in solidarity, at least in the first period—sought to replace the weak British Communist Party by a "broader current" which had at its head, to be sure, not members of the party, but "friends", almost Communists, at any rate, fine fellows and good acquaintances. The fine fellows, the "solid leaders", did not, of course, want to submit themselves to the leadership of a small, weak Communist party. That was their full right; the party cannot force anybody to submit himself to it. The agreements between the Communists and the "Lefts" (Purcell, Hicks, Cook) on the basis of the partial tasks of the trade union movement were, of course, quite possible and in certain cases unavoidable. But on one condition: the Communist party had to preserve its complete independence, even within the trade unions, act in its own name in all the questions of principle, criticize its "Left" allies whenever necessary, and in this way, win the confidence of the masses step by step.

This only possible road, however, appeared too long and uncertain to the bureaucrats of the C. I. They considered that by means of personal influence upon Purcell,

Hicks, Cook and the others (conversations behind the scenes, correspondence, banquets, friendly back-slapping, gentle exhortations), they would gradually and imperceptibly draw the Left opposition ("the broad current") into the stream of the Communist International. To guarantee such a success with greater security, the dear friends (Purcell, Hicks and Cook) were not to be vexed, or exasperated, or displeased by petty chicanery, by inopportune criticism, by sectarian intransigence, and so forth . . . But since one of the tasks of the Communist party consists precisely of upsetting the peace of and alarming all Centrists and semi-Centrists a radical measure had to be resorted to by actually subordinating the C. P. to the "minority movement". On the trade union field appeared only the leaders of this movement. The British Communist Party had practically ceased to exist for the masses.

9. What did the Russian Left Opposition demand in this question? In the first place, to re-establish the complete independence of the British Communist Party towards the trade unions. We affirmed that it is only under the influence of the independent slogans of the party and of its open criticism, that the minority movement could take form, appreciate its tasks more precisely, change its leaders, fortify itself in the trade unions while consolidating the position of Communism.

What did Stalin, Bucharin, Losovsky and Company reply to our criticism? "You want to push the British Communist Party onto the road of sectarianism. You want to drive Purcell, Hicks and Cook into the enemy's camp. You want to break with the minority movement."

What did the Left Opposition rejoin? "If Purcell and Hicks break with us, not because we demand of them that they transform themselves immediately into Communists—nobody demands that!—but because we ourselves want to remain Communists, this means that Purcell and Company are not friends but masked enemies. The quicker they show their nature, the better for the masses. We do

not at all want to break with the minority movement. On the contrary, we must give the greatest attention to this movement. The smallest step forward with the masses or with a part of the masses is worth more than a dozen abstract programs of circles of intellectuals, but the attention devoted to the masses has nothing in common with capitulation before their temporary leaders and semi-leaders. The masses need a correct orientation and correct slogans. This excludes all theoretical conciliation and the protection of confusionists who exploit the backwardness of the masses."

10. What were the results of the British experiment of Stalin? The minority movement, embracing almost a million workers, seemed very promising, but it bore the germs of destruction within itself. The masses knew as the leaders of the movement only Purcell, Hicks and Cook, whom, moreover, Moscow vouched for. These "Left" friends, in a serious test, shamefully betrayed the proletariat. The revolutionary workers were thrown into confusion, sank into apathy and naturally extended their disappointment to the C. P. itself which had only been the passive part of this whole mechanism of betrayal and perfidy. The minority movement was reduced to zero; the Communist party returned to the existence of a negligible sect. In this way, thanks to a radically false conception of the party, the greatest movement of the English proletariat, which led to the general strike, not only did not shake the apparatus of the reactionary bureaucracy, but, on the contrary, reinforced it and compromised Communism in Great Britain for a long time.

11. One of the psychological sources of opportunism is superficial impatience, the lack of confidence in the gradual growth of the party's influence, the desire to win the masses with the aid of an organizational manœuvre or personal diplomacy. Out of this springs the policy of combinations behind the scenes, the policy of silence, of hushing up, of self-renunciation, of adaptation to the ideas

and slogans of others; and finally, the complete passage to the positions of opportunism. The subordination of the C. P. to the Kuo Min Tang in China, the creation of workers' and peasants' parties in India, the subordination of the British party to the minority movement, etc., etc.—in all these phenomena, we see the same method of bureaucratic combinationism which commences with a superficial revolutionary impatience and finishes with opportunist treason.*

That is precisely why we have constantly insisted in these last years upon the enormous educational importance of the examples of the Comintern's strategy cited above. They should be studied and checked all over again at each fresh experience, not only in order to condemn the historical mistakes and crimes after the fact, but to learn to discern similar errors in a new situation at their very inception and consequently while they can still be corrected.

12. It must be said directly: the mistakes of some French Oppositionists, members of the League, in the trade union question reveal striking traits of resemblance with the lamentable British experiment. Only, the scale of the errors, in France, is as yet much smaller and they have not developed on the basis of a mass movement. This permits certain comrades to overlook these mistakes or to underestimate their principle importance. However, if the League were to permit, in the future as well, the trade

* The leading comrades in the United States inform us that in the American League, certain comrades—to be sure, only individual ones (in the literal sense of the word)—speak for a bloc with the Lovestoneites in the name of . . . "mass work". It is hard to imagine a more ridiculous, a more inept, a more sterile project than this. Do these people know at least a little of the history of the Bolshevik party? Have they read the works of Lenin? Do they know the correspondence of Marx and Engels? Or has all the history of the revolutionary movement passed them by without leaving a trace? Fortunately, the overwhelming majority of the American League has nothing in common with such ideas.

union work to be conducted by the methods which the majority of the old leadership worked out, the ideas and the banner of the Left Opposition would be compromised in France for a long time to come.

It would have been criminal to close one's eyes to this. Since there has been no success in rectifying these errors in their initial stage by means of private advice and warnings, then there only remains to name these errors and their authors openly in order to rectify the policy through collective efforts.

13. Beginning with April 1930, the League, in effect, gave up independent work in the trade unions for the benefit of the Unitary Opposition which, on its part, strives to have its own platform, its leadership, its policy. Within these limits, we have a striking analogy with the experiment of the minority movement in England. It must, however, be said that in the French circumstances there are certain features which, from the very beginning, render this experiment still more dangerous. In England, the minority movement as a whole was more to the *Left* than the official leadership of the trade unions.

Can this be said of the Unitary Opposition? No. In the ranks of the latter there are elements who are obviously tending towards the Right Opposition, that is, towards reformism. Their specific weight is not clear to us.

The principal force of the Unitary Opposition is the Teachers' Federation. In France, the teachers have always played a serious rôle in socialism, in syndicalism and in Communism. Among the teachers, we shall no doubt find many friends. Nevertheless, the Federation as a whole is not a proletarian Federation. Because of its social composition, the Teachers' Federation can furnish very good agitators, journalists and single revolutionists, but it cannot become the basis of a trade union movement. All its documents bespeak an insufficient clarity of political thought. The Marseilles congress of the Federation demonstrated that its members oscillate in a triangle between

the official course, the Left Opposition and the Right Opposition. We would render the worst service to the members of the Federation, as well as to the whole proletarian movement, if we were to cover up their mistakes, their vacillations, their lack of precision. Unfortunately, up to a few days ago this was the policy of the editorial board of LA VÉRITÉ—a policy of silence and this was not by chance.

14. Then you want to break with the Unitary Opposition? Whoever poses the question this way says by this alone that the Communists, *as Communists*, cannot participate in the work of the Unitary Opposition. But if this were the case, it would signify quite simply that the Unitary Opposition is an organization of the masked enemies of Communism. Happily, this is not so. The U. O. as a whole is neither a Communist nor an anti-Communist organization, because it is *heterogeneous*. We are obliged to take this heterogeneity into account in our practical activity. We can and must display the greatest attention towards the various groups and even towards the personalities who are developing towards Marxism. But all this on one condition: that when we appear before the workers in the trade unions, we act in the name of the Communist League without admitting any censorship of our acts except the control of the League itself (or the whole party after the re-establishment of the unity of the Communist ranks).

15. In the ranks of the Unitary Opposition there are indisputably elements who sympathize strongly with the Left Opposition without being members of the League: they must be brought together under our banner. There are indefinite elements who strive with all their strength to remain in this position, transforming it into a "platform". With these elements, we can have tactical agreements on a definite basis, preserving full freedom of mutual criticism. Finally, in the ranks of the U. O. there are also, indisputably, alien elements, who strayed there accidentally, or who

penetrated it as recruiting agents for reformism... They make use of obscurity in order to introduce decomposition in it. The sooner they are unmasked and eliminated, the better it will be for the cause.

16. But aren't we for collaboration in the trade unions with workers regardless of their political and philosophical views? Quite right. But the U. O. is not a trade union organization but a political faction having as its task to influence the trade union movement. Let us leave it to Monatte and his friends the P. O. P. ists* to act under a mask. Revolutionists act openly before the workers. In the U. O. we can work only with those who go side by side with us, in the same direction, even though not to the end of our road.

17. Certain comrades insist above all that the Communists must fight for their influence on the trade unions by means of ideas and not by mechanical means. This thought, which may seem incontestable, is frequently converted into an empty commonplace. The Centrist bureaucracy also declares quite frequently and quite sincerely that its task is to influence by ideas and not to exercise a mechanical pressure.

The whole question, in the last analysis, is reduced to the political and economic orientation, to the slogans and the program of action. If the orientation is right, if the slogans correspond to the needs of the movement, then the masses in the trade unions experience no "constraint". On

* Adherents of the Parti Ouvrier et Paysan (Workers' and Peasants' Party), led by Sellier, Garchery, Gelis and other former leaders of the Communist party who were expelled after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. This Right wing group is the replica in France of the Lovestone group in the United States or the Brandler group in Germany. The recent information from France indicates that this grouping has finally taken the next logical step away from Communism by adhering to the "two-and-a-half International" with which the Italian group led by Balabanova is associated.—Tr.

the contrary, if the orientation is wrong, if the policy of revolutionary ascent is proclaimed at the moment of political ebb, and inversely, then the mass inevitably takes such a leadership as a mechanical pressure upon it. The question consequently is reduced to whether the theoretical premises of the Left Opposition are sufficiently serious and profound, if its cadres are sufficiently educated to appreciate the situation correctly and to advance the corresponding slogans. All this must be tested in practise. It is therefore all the more impermissible for us to pass over in silence or to underestimate the sins and the mistakes of our temporary allies as well as of ourselves.

18. Certain members of the League, incredible as it may seem, protest against the intention of somebody or other to subordinate the U. O. to the League. Without noticing it, they fall into the pitiful argumentation which Monatte launches against Communism as a whole. In practise, the matter is summed up in the fact that some comrades working in the trade unions want to have *for themselves* complete independence from the League, considering that by their manœuvres, admonitions and personal diplomacy, they will achieve results which the League is incapable of achieving by collective work. Other comrades, who desire for themselves the same independence in the press, welcome such tendencies. The question arises: why then have these comrades joined the League if they have no confidence in it?

19. How do matters really stand with the "subordination" of the U. O.? The very question is false. Only its members are subordinated to the League. Since the majority of the U. O. are not members of the League, it can only be a matter of persuasion, of agreement, of compromise, of bloc, but not of subordination. In reality, the opponents of the so-called subordination of the U. O. to the League are demanding the actual subordination of the League to the U. O. This was precisely the situation up to now. In its trade union work, that is, in its most impor-

tant work, the League was subordinated to the U. O. in the interests of which it practically renounced all independence. The Marxists cannot and should not tolerate such a policy for another day.

20. Certain leading comrades, who obstinately conducted a policy of capitulation up to yesterday, declare today that they are "completely in agreement" on the necessity of transforming the U. O. into a bloc. In reality, they want to content themselves with a change of name. The quicker they "agree" with the Marxist criticism, the more they conduct, in actuality, a struggle for everything to remain as before. They simply want to utilize the phraseology of the Marxist criticism in order to cover up the old policy. These methods are not new, but time does not render them more attractive. A revolutionary organization would be permeated for a long time, if not forever, by the poison of duplicity and falsehood if it permitted an opportunist policy to mask itself with revolutionary phraseology. Let us firmly hope that the League will not permit this.

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