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AN OPEN LETTER

To All Revolutionary Proletarian Organizations and Groupings

FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

The fact that Hitler came to power, without the slightest resistance on the part of the two "mighty" working-class parties - one of which, moreover, leaned for support upon the USSR - has decisively exposed the internal putrefaction of the Second and Third Internationals. In August 1933, four organizations (ICL, RSP, OSP and SAP) formulated for the first time in a programmatic document the new historic task: THE CREATION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL. The events that have transpired since that day have irrefutably confirmed that there is no other road.

The annihilation of the Austrian proletariat has proved that in order to gain victory it will not suffice, at the last moment, after the party has been driven into a blind alley, to issue a call for insurrection to the masses that have been disoriented and drained by opportunism. Victory must be systematically prepared for by means of revolutionary policies in all spheres of the working class movement.

This very same lesson flows immutably from the annihilation of the Spanish proletariat. Under no conditions, all the more so during the time of revolution, is it permissible to turn one's back to the toilers for the sake of a bloc with the bourgeoisie. It is impossible to expect and to demand from the duped and disillusioned masses that they will fly to arms upon the belated appeal of a party in which they have lost confidence. The proletarian revolution cannot be improvised by an order by incessant and irreconcilable class struggle which gains for the leadership the invincible confidence of the party, which fuses the vanguard with the entire class, and which transforms the proletariat into the leader of all the exploited in the city and the village.

After the ignominious downfall of the main section of reformism, the German social democracy which had rotted to the core, the "left" wing of the Second International went down in ruins in Austria and Spain. But these fearful lessons passed without leaving so much as a trace; the leading cadres of reformism, both in the party and in the trade unions, have degenerated to the marrow of their bones, they are bound to the bourgeoisie by their material interests and their patriotic views, and they are utterly incapable of resuming the road of the class struggle.

The parties of the Second International calmly reconcile themselves to the fact that their Belgian chairman joined with the capitalists and the liberal dealers, at the very first beck of finance capital, in order to effect the salvaging of the banks upon the backs of the toiling masses. Vandervelde was followed by De Man, the vainglorious critic of Karl Marx, and the creator of a "plan"; nor did the "left" centrist Spaak fail to betray the socialist opposition in return for the livery of a minister.

The French Socialist party, mindful neither of the lessons nor the warnings, continues to clutch vainly at the tailcoats of the "republican" bourgeoisie and pins greater hopes upon the friendship of the Radicals than upon the revolutionary might of the proletariat. In Holland, Scandinavia, Switzerland, in all other countries, in every part of the world, the social democracy, despite the decay of capitalism, continues to remain the agency of the bourgeoisie within the working class, and evinces its utter inability to mobilize the masses in its own defense against Fascism.

Should the electoral successes of the LABOR PARTY raise it to power once again, the consequence of it would not be a peaceful Socialist transformation of Great Britain, but the consolidation of imperialist reaction, that is to say, an epoch of civil war, in the face of which the leadership of the Labor Party will inevitably reveal its total inadequacy. The parliamentary and trade unionist cretins have still to be convinced that in England the threat of Fascism is no less real than on the continent.

In the meantime, the Third International continues to squander away its shred of influence and authority that it had acquired during the first five years of its existence. In Austria and Spain, despite the exceptionally favorable circumstances, the Communist International only proved itself incapable of creating an organization in the

least influential, but it systematically compromised the very idea of the revolutionary party in the eyes of the workers. The Saar Plebiscite demonstrated the fact that the German proletariat has lost a very vestige of confidence not only in the social democracy but also in the Communist party which so ingloriously capitulated to Hitler. In Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Scandinavia, the sections of the Communist International, loaded down by 12 years of fatal policies are incapable of emerging from their state as nonentities.

True, after the German debacle, the Communist International palmed off the adventurist policy of the "Third Period" by the capitulatory policy of the united front at any price. However, the ~~existing~~ experience of France, where the new turn has attained its greatest development, reveals that with all its contradictions and zigzags, the Communist International manages to retain its function of a brake upon the proletarian revolution. Rejecting the creation of workers' militia in the face of the immediate Fascist danger, and substituting a program of immediate demands for the struggle for power, the Communist International becomes the cultivator of the worst illusions of reformism and pacifism, it factually gives support to the right wing of the Socialist party as against the left, demoralizes the proletarian vanguard, and clears the road for a Fascist overturn.

And, finally, the founder of the Communist International, the Communist Party of the USSR has been completely crushed during the last few years by an uncontrolled bureaucracy which has turned the dictatorship of the proletariat into the conservative absolutism of Stalin. By persecutions, frauds, amalgams, and bloody repressions the ruling clique strives to nip in the bud every manifestation of Marxist thought. Nowhere in the world is genuine Leninism hounded with so bestial a cruelty as in the USSR.!

The most recent opportunistic twist of the Communist International is bound up closely with the turn of the Soviets in their foreign policy to the side of the League of Nations and a military alliance with French imperialism. The ruling bureaucracy of the USSR has reached the final conclusion that the Communist International is impotent to afford it any assistance whatever against the war danger, and that, at the same time, it hampers the functioning of Soviet diplomacy. The base and truly servile dependency of the Communist International upon the Soviet upper crust is expressed in a particularly open manner in the instance of convoking the Seventh World Congress. Set, after protracted delays, for the latter part of last year, the Congress was again postponed to the first half of the present year. However, there is no ground to believe that it will actually convene this time either. Yet almost seven years have elapsed since the last Congress (August, 1928) - an entire epoch, during which the face of the entire world, Europe especially, has been changed. The fate of the Seventh Congress, as well as the fate of the Communist International, is being decided not by its sections themselves, which do not even dare to speak above a whisper, but by Soviet diplomacy and its secret negotiations with the representatives of France, England, and other countries.

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In the meantime, the destructive forces of imperialist capitalism continue their hellish work. The collapse of world economy, the unemployment of tens of millions, and the ruin of the peasants place imperiously upon the order of the day the task of the socialist revolution. The toilers, embittered and aroused, seek for a way out. The prostration and collapse and putrefaction of the Second and Third Internationals leave the proletariat without revolutionary leadership, and impel the petty bourgeoisie to the road of despair. The bankrupt leaders seek to shift the responsibility for the triumph of Fascism to the "passivity" of the proletariat; thus political betrayal is consummated by "calumny."

Thrashing in the grip of insolvable contradictions, capitalism is preparing to plunge THE PEOPLES INTO A NEW SLAUGHTER. Ministers and dictators openly speculate whether the outbreak of the war will come in a year, or three years from now. All the governments, vying with one another, are preparing the most destructive instruments, and thereby from every side they are bringing closer and closer an explosion which may be immeasurably more frightful than was the war of 1914-1918.

The leaders of the so-called working class parties and trade unions are loud in their praise of the superiorities of peace, they babble of disarmament, exhort their governments to make peace among themselves, arouse the hopes of the masses in the work of the League of Nations, and at the same time they swear fealty to the cause of "national defense," i.e. the defense of bourgeois rule with its inevitable wars.

Under the cover of the "united front" and even of "organic unity," Soviet diplomacy is preparing, behind the backs of the class conscious workers, the national unification of the sections of both internationals with the bourgeoisie in those countries which may be in a military alliance with the Soviet state. Thus, the outbreak of a new war must lead to a new betrayal, before which August 4, 1914 will pale

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The Soviet bureaucracy's betrayal of the cause of the international revolution has flung the world proletariat far back. The difficulties that face the revolutionary vanguard are unbelievable, but its position is, nevertheless, incomparably more favorable today than it was on the eve of the last war. At that time capitalism appeared to be all-powerful, almost invincible. The patriotic debacle of the International came entirely unexpected, even by Lenin. Everywhere the revolutionary elements were caught unprepared. The first international conference - very small numerically and in its majority undecided - took place only more than a year after the beginning of the war. The formation of the revolutionary cadres proceeded slowly. The possibility of the proletarian revolution was rejected even by the majority of the "Zimmerwaldists." The state of things was changed only by the October ~~xxx~~ victory in Russia, in the 40th month of the war, providing a mighty impulse for the formation of the Third International.

Today, the internal feebleness and decay of capitalism are so manifest that it even provides the main theme for Fascist demagogy. In the colossal crisis in the United States, in the no less colossal unemployment in the economic adventurism of Roosevelt, in the sweep of the strike struggles, in the ferment within all working class organizations there are being lodged for the first time the conditions for a mighty development of the revolutionary movement in North America. The example of the first victorious proletarian revolution lives in the memory of the masses. The experiences of the greatest events of the last two decades have been burned into the consciousness of the best militants. Genuinely revolutionary organizations, or at least groupings exist in all countries. Between them there is an ideological and in part an organizational bond. Even today they represent an incomparably more influential, homogenous, and steeled force than did the "Zimmerwald left" which assumed the initiative for preparing the Third International in the fall of 1915.

Opposition groupings are springing up and growing stronger inside the reformist parties and trade unions. Some of these assume the shape of independent organizations. Within the sections of the Comintern, as a consequence of the prison regime, the opposition bears a more mute and masked character; but it is developing even here. Even in the USSR the need of ever new cleansings and repressions is evidence of the fact that the bureaucracy cannot succeed in rooting out the spirit of Marxist criticism which is so hateful to it.

Today, the opportunist moods and tendencies bear predominantly a CENTRIST character, that is, an intermediate one between social patriotism and revolution. Under the conditions of the collapse and the decomposition of the traditional mass organizations, centrism represents in many cases an inevitable transitional stage even for the progressive working class groupings. Marxists must be able to find access to all such tendencies, in order by their example and propaganda to speed their passage to the revolutionary road. In so doing, the condition for success is irreconcilable criticism of the centrist leadership, exposure of attempts to recreate the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ International, and a ceaseless explanation of the fact that the revolutionary tasks of our epoch doom beforehand to an ignominious collapse unifications which are vacillating and amorphous.

The slogan of "unity" for all working class organizations, regardless of their programs and tactics, is being zealously propagandized at present by the centrists, and is being ably exploited

By the more perspicacious reformists who are afraid, for good reason, that they will be thrown overboard. For the idea of a New International the centrists often substitute the idea of merging the two old Internationals. In reality, unity with reformists and social patriots, of the social democratic or the Stalinist type, signifies in the last analysis unity with national bourgeoisie, and consequently the ~~inevitable~~ inevitable split of the proletariat on the world scale and then nationally also especially in the event of war. Genuine unity of the International and of its national sections can be assured only on the revolutionary Marxist foundation, which in its own turn can be created only by breaking with ~~the~~ the social patriots. To remain silent about the principled conditions and guarantees of proletarian unity implies serving as a chorus for the widespread illusions, duping the workers, and preparing new catastrophes.

The degrading and hopeless position of the two old Internationals is sufficiently denoted by the fact that the chairman of one is the humble minister of His King, while the factual master of the second uses the world proletarian organization as so much small change in diplomatic deals. Whatever unification maneuvers the two equally depraved bureaucracies undertake, it is not they who will create the unity of the proletariat, and it is not they who will open the way out. The strivings of the centrists to reconcile the irreconcilable and to save that which is fated to destruction by means of partial patches are doomed to destruction beforehand. The new epoch requires a New International. The immediate condition for success on this road is a close consolidation nationally and internationally of the genuine proletarian revolutionists, the pupils of Marx and Lenin, on a common program and under a common banner.

It would be fatal to attempt to prescribe an identical course for all countries. Depending upon national conditions, upon the degree of the decomposition of the old working class organizations, and finally upon the condition of their own forces at a given moment, the Marxists (the revolutionary socialists, the internationalists, the Bolsheviki-Leninists) can step forward now in the form of an independent organization, now in the guise of a faction in one of the old parties, or in the trade unions. But on whatever arena, and with whatever methods they function, they are bound to speak in the name of unqualified principles and clear revolutionary slogans. They do not play hide and seek with the working class; they do not conceal their aims; they do not substitute diplomacy and combinations for a principled struggle. **MARXISTS ALWAYS AND UNDER ALL CONDITIONS OPENLY SPEAK OUT WHAT IS.**

The war danger which is a life and death question for the national masses is the supreme test for all the groupings and tendencies within the working class. "The Struggle for Peace," "The Struggle Against War," "War on War" and similar slogans are hollow and fraudulent phrases if they are not accompanied by the propaganda and application of revolutionary methods of struggle. The only method of putting an end to war is to overthrow the bourgeoisie. The only method of overthrowing the bourgeoisie is the armed insurrection.

Ad against the reactionary life of "national defense" it is necessary to advance the slogan of the revolutionary destruction of the national state. To the insane asylum of capitalist Europe it is necessary to counterpose the program of SOCIALIST UNITED STATES OF EUROPE, as a stage toward the United States of the entire world.

The Marxists irreconcilably reject the pacifist slogans of "disarmament" "arbitration" and "amity between peoples" (i.e. between capitalist governments, etc.), as opium the purpose of which is to befuddle the national masses. The deals between working class organizations and petty bourgeois pacifists (The Amsterdam-Pleyel Committee, and similar undertakings) render the best service to imperialism by distracting the attention of the working class away from reality with its grave struggle, and beguiling them instead with impotent parades.

The struggle against war and imperialism cannot be the work of any sort of special "committees." The struggle against war is the preparation for revolution, that is to say, the work of working class parties and of the International. The Marxists pose this colossal task before the proletarian vanguard without any frills. To the DECOMPOSING slogan of "disarmament" they counterpose the slogan of WINNING THE ARMY and ARMING THE WORKERS. It is along this point that there passes one of the most important lines of demarcation between Marxism and centrism. Whoever dares not utter aloud the revolutionary tasks will never find the courage to solve them.

During the year and a half that has elapsed since the proclamation of the first program of the Fourth International, the struggle for its principles and its ideas was not suspended for a single day; the number of revolutionary national sections and groups has grown; some have extended their ranks and influence; others attained a greater homogeneity and cohesiveness; organizations in the same country have united (Holland, the USA); a number of programmatic and tactical documents have been worked out. This entire labor will undoubtedly proceed much better if it is correlated and unified on a world scale under the banner of the Fourth International. The impending war danger does not brook a single day's delay for this task.

The new parties and the New International must be built on a new foundation; that is the key to the solution of all other tasks. Naturally the tempo and the period of the new revolutionary upbuilding and its consummation depends on the general course of the class struggle, upon the future victories and defeats of the proletariat. But Marxists are ~~not~~ no fatalists. They do not shift over to the "historical process" those very tasks which the historical process has posed before them. The initiative of a conscious minority, the scientific program, the bold and ceaseless agitation in the name of clearly formulated goals, the merciless criticism of all vacillation - that is one of the most important factors for the victory of the proletariat. Without a fused and steeled revolutionary party a socialist revolution is inconceivable.

The conditions are grave; the obstacles are great; the tasks are colossal but there are no grounds whatever for pessimism or loss of courage. Despite all the defeats of the proletariat, the position of the class enemy remains a hopeless one. Capitalism is doomed. There is no salvation for humanity except in the ~~socialist~~ socialist revolution.

In the very sequence of the Internationals there is to be found an internal logic which coincides with the historic rise of the proletariat. The First International advanced the scientific program of proletarian revolution, but fell victim because it lacked a mass base. The Second International lifted out of the darkness, educated and mobilized millions of workers, but in the decisive hour it was betrayed by the parliamentary and trade union bureaucracy depraved ~~and~~ by capitalism in bloom. The Third International set the example for the first time of the victorious proletarian revolution but it was ground between the millstones of the bureaucracy of the isolated Soviet State and the reformist bureaucracy of the West. Today, under the conditions of the decisive capitalist collapse, the Fourth International, standing on the shoulders of its predecessors, enriched by their victories and defeats, will mobilize together the toilers of the West and East for the victorious assault upon the strongholds of world capitalism.

Workers of the World, Unite!

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We herewith append the "Declaration of Four" on the fundamental principles of the Fourth International. Not a single line of this manifesto has become antiquated. The present letter is only a restatement of the "Declaration of Four" in the light of the experience of the last year and a half.

We call upon all parties, organizations, factions, both within the old parties as well as the trade unions, all revolutionary working class associations and groupings who are in agreement with us upon the fundamental principles and upon the great task we have posed - the preparation for and the building of the Fourth International - to send us their signatures to the present Open Letter, together with any proposal or criticisms they may have. Individual comrades who have not been connected with our work up to now, if they seriously intend to join the common ranks from now on should get in touch with us.

The initiating organizations who are signatories to the Open Letter have resolved to create a PROVISIONAL CONTACT COMMITTEE between those parties and groups which stand upon the position of the Fourth International. The Provisional Committee is to be entrusted with the issuance of an information bulletin. In the immediate future the Committee is to assure the correct and mutual working out of the fundamental programmatic and tactical documents of the Fourth International.

The question of preparing an International Conference will be decided on the basis of replies received and the general course of the preparatory work.

The Provisional Secretary is:

Address: