

The International Conference

by Jay Lovestone

NOWADAYS there is one question that is uppermost in the minds of the class-conscious workers of every country: Why is it that the Communist International doesn't grow organizationally or politically under such favorable objective conditions as prevail today?

To ask this question is to touch the heart of the crisis in the world party of Communism. For, after all, the test of the tactics of any political party, particularly a revolutionary party, a Communist Party, is to be found in its practice, in its application in life. We, who gathered in the first International Conference of the Communist Opposition, were fully aware of this.

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The First Conference of the International Communist Opposition

It was to answer this question in the interests of the international working class, it was to enable the Communist International to overcome its paralysis, to utilize the present world crisis situation to the maximum, that was our sole purpose in the conference. Not differing in principle with the Communist International but only in tactics, we gathered *not* to build a new Communist International but to re-unite the world Communist forces, to reconstruct the existing Comintern on a healthy basis. The extremely favorable objective conditions for developing the world Party of Communism, the growing menace of Fascism especially in Germany, the increasing danger of war against the Soviet Union, animated us only to redouble our efforts for unity of the Comintern and to continue our fight against the present non-Leninist tactical line of the Communist International—a line which is primarily responsible for the acute crisis in the Comintern.

Due to legal and financial difficulties not all comrades elected could come to the Conference. Their written reports and proposals were given thorough consideration. This was the case with the representatives of India, Austria, Finland and Italy. Representatives of the Communist Party of Sweden and of Alsace-Lorraine which were expelled from the Communist International as parties, from the Communist Party Oppositions of Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Czechoslovakia were present. Norway was fraternally represented.

The order of business for the three day conference (Dec. 16, 17, 18) was:

1. Consideration of oral and written reports of the various opposition sections.
2. Discussion and adoption of draft platform of International Communist Opposition.
3. Organization and press matters.

There was a certain vigorous revolutionary optimism running thru the deliberations of the Conference. Every report and reporter underscored the splendid objective situation for the growth of the Communist Party—the most favorable in years. Here were delegates who were the founders of the various sections of the Communist International, experienced fighters in the working class movement, militant battlers together with Liebknecht and Luxemburg, organizers of the Spartacus group in Germany, co-workers with Lenin in exile, leaders of the workers on the barricades fighting for Soviet Power. Ours was not an optimism artificially generated to hide defeats or to please bureaucrats. It was an optimism founded on Leninist understanding, on revolutionary conviction, sacrifice, and boundless devotion to our class, the exploited workers.

The spirit of the Conference, the manner of discussion, the method of settling differences, the genuine critical attitude pervading the deliberations, all were most encouraging signs of a better day drawing nearer in the life of the Communist International. Those dispirited difficulties, by temporary defeats, by the slowness of the developing world revolution, those who entertain "theories" about the degeneration of the world Communist Party certainly could find no evidence or support for their false conclusions neither in our discussions or decisions.

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The Present Position of the Comintern

We faced the facts as we found them—and not as it would suit fancy—in the picture we had before us of the state of affairs in the Communist International. Like a red thread there ran thru all our work a feeling that the critical condition of the Communist International is the grave concern of the entire international working class—especially of the class-conscious workers.

An examination of the situation in the world Party of Communism shows how deplorable the present situation is. Let us start with the plus side of the ledger. The most important section of the Communist International is the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. It is doing a mighty good job, under the most difficult circumstances, in speeding up the construction of Socialism in the Soviet Union. Together with the Young Communist League, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union totals about five million members. Truly, a powerful army! But in striking and painful contrast to this is the picture of the Communist International outside of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. Here the situation is veritably catastrophic.

On paper the Communist International shows 50 sections. But which of these Parties is, today a mass Party or has mass influence over the workers? What more tragic case of paralysis could we cite than the Communist Party of Great Britain? With such extremely favorable conditions for the development of a mass Communist Party, we have a vanishing, sterile sect which plays no role in these decisive days of class war in England. In Czechoslovakia, where only a few years ago, the Communist Party was the biggest workers political party and of tremendous influence in the trade unions, we now have a helpless, uninfluential organization—a faint shadow of its former self. France tells a similarly dismaying story for our movement. As rapidly and as heavily as the Communist Party of France and the Red Federation of Labor (C.G.T.U.) have been losing members, the Socialist Party of France and the reformist federation (C.G.T.) have been gaining ground. In India the Communist International never had more than fragmentary strength. In China the Communist Party is bled white and has very little organized strength in the cities, which is decisive.

The situation in the United States needs little elaboration here.

It is true that Communist Party of Germany is still

a mass party. But it certainly is not availing itself of the splendid opportunities to wield initiative and give leadership. The ultra-left line, coupled with its rank opportunism in its dangerous brand of "national Bolshevism" in making the Versailles Treaty the point of departure of all struggles, has crippled this only mass Communist Party in the whole Communist International as an effective force to defeat Fascism. Should German Fascism win as it did in Italy—as is entirely possible in a short time—then it means the collapse of this one mass Communist Party outside of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

That with a correct line and unity the Communist International could today deal mortal blows to capitalism, to reformism and to Fascism, is shown by the growth of the Swedish Communist Party (Opposition) and the Alsatian Communist Party (Opposition) The only Communist Parties beside the C.P.S.U. to gain in membership in the last year, were the Communist Party of Sweden (Opposition) which gained nearly 4000 in 1930 and the Communist Party of Alsace (Opposition). And with correct Leninist tactics the Communist Opposition forces are now making real headway in India.

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A Platform of Communist Struggle

Recognizing the different conditions and specific peculiarities in the various countries, yet, on the basis of fundamental principles of the Comintern, our general analysis of the present world crisis leads us to certain concrete tasks on a world scale.

First and foremost, in the light of the economic crisis, the imperialist war danger, the growing menace of an attack on the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, our platform emphasizes the imperative need for Communist unity in the revolutionary class struggle. In the eyes of the Conference this question of Communist unity was a life and death question for the working class. To achieve this party democracy, democratic centralism and Leninist discipline must be restored and guaranteed. All efforts must be made towards the development of a genuine international collective leadership in the Communist International. Our appeal for unity addressed to the Communist International and the international working class is in this strain.

The development of a united working class front against capitalist reaction—particularly against Fascism—along with the energetic unconditional defense of the Soviet Union were emphasized as central tasks. The Conference pointed out that it would be impossible to overemphasize in the present international situation the importance of preparing the working class, now and today, for what will face it in the coming imperialist war—the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war against the exploiters. In the same sense, the mobilization of workers in the "mother countries" for support of the revolutionary struggles in the colonies assumes inestimable importance.

Today it is particularly necessary to popularize the Soviet idea, the Soviet system as the highest democracy, as the only working class democracy, in the ranks of the workers by tying up its experiences and lessons with the concrete everyday needs and demands of the workers.

Our platform very correctly emphasizes the Leninist tactical attitude toward trade unions and the need for the militants and Communists working in the mass unions. The necessity of united front tactics, the need of the Party's winning the majority of working class are brought home very clearly.

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The first International Communist Opposition Conference was possible only because of agreement on fundamental principles. The tactical differences among the various Communist Opposition groups were cleared up and settled mainly thru the practical political activities of our movement. Our international ideological homogeneity and unity were realized only thru a Communist co-operation and discussion and the application of the Leninist principles of Party democracy on an international scale. Our agreements were obtained only thru understanding and conviction and not thru the fear of bureaucratic measures as in the Executive Committee of the Communist International today or thru the worship of a supposedly "infallible" leader like Trotsky, as is the case of the vanishing remnants of the Trotskyists.

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The International Center

The International Communist Opposition Center is thus not a new Comintern. It is only the organizational center of the struggle for the restoration and reconstruction of the Communist International. Today it is only in our ranks where the fundamental problems of the international labor and world Communist movements can be earnestly and honestly discussed.

Indeed, it is of the greatest historical significance that in this decisive hour for the working class, there should come forward an international force which shows the way to victory for the revolutionary labor movement. The International Communist Opposition Center is dedicated to the highest cause of the world proletariat. We are pledged to fight unswervingly for the restoration of unity and a correct line in the ranks of the Comintern. Only then will the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat be able to inspire, organize and lead the working class of the world to victory over the capitalist class—to a new and better day—to the Communist society.

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