

# THE RED FLAG

ORGAN OF THE MARXIST LEAGUE

No. 1 (New Series)

MAY, 1936

PRICE ONE PENNY

## SOCIALIST YOUTH AND POLICY.

*After an enforced silence of eighteen months we resume publication. The need for our paper has become increasingly clear. True, it would be difficult to find a trace of the tactics against which we campaigned previously but the sweeping aside of the old policies has carried away as well many basic principles of revolutionary marxism. The change has been accompanied by a wholesale dumping of revolutionary principles, a mutilation of basic texts, a continued distorting of revolutionary history.*

*The battleground for the creation of the new revolutionary leadership, is, at present, within the organised labour movement. Whilst our position is, at present, mainly one of propagandists we shall make our contribution to the formulation of a militant policy for the organised workers, to the building of a strong left-wing, to the preservation and application of revolutionary marxism in the conditions of today. We shall maintain contact with groups abroad working for the same purpose. The help and support of our readers is needed if we are to succeed.*

### Socialist Youth

The Red Flag will frequently publish comment upon the work and policies of the Labour League of Youth, the only approach to a mass socialist youth organisation existing at present. At its annual conference the conflicting political groupings within the League combined to carry, in the teeth of Labour Party Executive Committee opposition, the demand for internal freedom and for control of its organ and its officers. The efforts of the Labour Chiefs to reduce the League to a 'junior' section, playing parlour games, running errands for local parties and learning to become 'citizens' of a moribund capitalism, were overwhelmingly defeated.

The great social struggles of our day demand revolutionary temper and policy. The youth belongs to this day and age and its conditions and therefore responds the more readily and freshly to the gigantic demands made upon the participants in the struggle. Efforts to destroy this must be met by stronger efforts to harness youth beneath the banner of revolutionary socialism. For the sake of the League itself as well as in the wider interests of the working class the youth must equip itself for its tasks. The Labour Party officials will not submit to their initial defeat and if the League is to meet renewed and reinforced attack it must face up to the immense amount of political and organisational work yet to be done.

Two jobs stand out for immediate attention—they are inter-related. The first is to secure general agreement, at least amongst the more advanced members, on policy; the second, which depends largely upon the first, is to turn the League and its membership to the work of winning the support of the young workers, to enable it to carry the policies and slogans of militant youth to the mass of unorganised, exploited, working class youth.

In the latter connection efforts have been made to provide lines of work which, in the main, represent a good start and which have clearly arisen from the experiences, the successes and failures of the League in the past. In the same way the political programme of the League needs to crystallise in a bold, convincing but simple form the basic principles

of revolutionary internationalism. But it must be worked for in a way that will secure the enthusiastic adherence of the large majority. To sling about catchwords with ultimatum and enforced, untimely artificial division on all questions would, in the present state of the League, isolate the revolutionaries and assist reformism. To aim, as some groups are doing, at a quick, snap division and the subsequent dragging out of a small section is as disastrous in its results as the other tendency which seeks to obliterate political differences in the name of 'broad fronts.'

The main group in the League of Youth is the 'Advance' which works for a 'broad youth movement.' Everyone gets aboard the bus without worrying about the destination or the driver. That is how it appears, on the surface. In actual fact the 'Advance' represents a very real and definite political platform—the conference debate on the Labour Party's Peace policy showed that 'Advance' works for organisational independence whilst creating the conditions for political dependence upon reformism.

The spokesmen of the Labour Party put over the pro-capitalist League of Nations, anti-class struggle policy of the Party and 'Advance' differed not at all in essentials, however much more 'revolutionary' the phraseology. How can organisational freedom go hand in hand with political slavery? The legitimate struggle of the youth for internal freedom and control of their organisation cannot be carried through successfully on such a basis.

The League of Youth's effort to win the right to discuss freely and as an organisation matters of policy is not important in itself. It is important because through the winning of these rights the youth can be the better equipped to play an active part in the wider struggles of the working class, can resist the deadening and corrupting influence of reformism and raise itself to a full appreciation and understanding of the political needs of our day.

### "Top Hat"

John McGovern is now, it would seem, anxious to draw attention to the 'atrocities' alleged by the Fascists to have been committed by Abyssinian soldiers, lest the British workers should be deceived into supporting the defenders of Ethiopia. The recent efforts to set off the indignation, roused by the Fascists use of gas and the pitiless slaughter of soldiers and civilians alike, by dragging out the supposed Abyssinian atrocities arise logically from the policy previously adopted by the leaders of the I.L.P., that of describing the war as one between 'two dictators.'

"Top Hat" McGovern combines this opposition to working class action in aid of the Abyssinians with cheap, gutter-press, ill-informed attacks upon the Soviet Union. Marxist criticism of the policies carried out by the heads of the Russian Communist Party and Soviet Government has nothing in common with the McGovern outbursts which are merely an apparently 'revolutionary' covering for the non-revolutionary actions of the I.L.P. leaders.

Where does the I.L.P. membership stand on this issue? At the conference it showed itself willing to throw over the 'pacifist' policy of the

inner Executive, but not the leaders who espoused it. The leadership of the I.L.P. is to continue to advocate a policy contrary to that decided upon at the conference whilst a membership ballot is organised within three months, the results of which will not be accepted by the Maxton, MacGovern group unless they agree with it or unless changed circumstances make the decision meaningless.

### The Internationals

The war on Abyssinia and Hitler's desperate adventures in quest of conqueror's laurels have tested the Socialist and Communist Internationals in front of the entire working class. Both have turned from the building of the international power of the working class to support the League of Nations. Both have become agents for the capitalist League of Nations, for one group of powers against others, in the ranks of the working-class. The combined efforts of these two bodies have brought confusion, distrust and doubt to the organised workers and done considerable harm to the cause of proletarian internationalism.

For the Socialist International this is not new. Their record is well-known. But the present divided, weakened and distorted Socialist International could never have maintained its present policy were it not for the Communist Internationals' change of front. At the recently held London meeting of the Socialist International, the views of the 'left' were much weaker, much less aggressive than would otherwise have been the case, whilst the British Labour Party continued its domination of international policy because of the support for that policy now expressed in circles always regarded as revolutionary.

In all countries opposition has developed against the policies of the two internationals. This opposition has organised itself in the main in the International Socialist Bureau which, however, made up of widely diverging opinions, refuses to decide in favour of building a new revolutionary international. It is therefore left swinging between the Socialist and Communist Internationals unwanted by either and undecided as to the direction it intends to go. Meantime, new opposition to the policy of reformism makes its appearance in the Parties of the Second International with, as yet, little or no organised international relations.

Our job, as we see it, is to help direct attention to the need for the building of new revolutionary leadership on an international scale. Sooner or later the growing pressure of events, the sharpening of the struggle and the nearing menace of war will pose the need for an international sharply.

Meantime the work of turning the advanced workers towards the building of the forces for a new international must be continued.

### Ready Soon

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## "POPULAR FRONTS."

Increased international tension and growing crisis in France and in Spain have combined to make necessary a critical examination of the proposals for 'broad' and 'popular' fronts against war and Fascism. Those in favour of such movements argue that in this way wide masses of people are brought into the struggle: those opposing are supposed to be imbued with a sectarian desire to preserve the 'purity' of Socialist ideas and organisation. Actually much deeper issues are involved. To conceal the real issues indulging criticism of 'popular fronts' would be a grave disservice to the workers' movement. United action by all working class parties and organisations are essential to the successful waging of the workers' struggle. Far from opposing this we fought for the united front when it was bitterly resisted by the very organisations now advocating it. And united action can, and should, include electoral agreements as long as vital differences of programme and policy are not concealed. But the 'broad fronts' are more, much more, than agreements between workers' parties. For example—the proposed 'Peace Councils' are meant to bring together every and any organisation, pacifist, religious, middle-class, in favour of 'peace.' Everyone being in favour, in words at any rate, of peace there is clearly no limit to the all-embracing character of these councils, as indeed their advocates boast.

### Peace Councils?

Now it is obviously desirable that where young people are already organised advantage should be taken of this to win support for the workers' cause. That efforts in this direction are now proclaimed so loudly as necessary shows how incompetent and sectarian have been the various propaganda departments of youth organisations. But to win young workers to the cause of revolution is to win them away from 'peace' and religious bodies, to break the influence of such bodies over numbers of our fellow workers.

This is not the intention of those urging 'Peace Councils.'

Today we see that one section of working class opinion is proposing the development of "Peace Councils" as a weapon in the struggle against war. These bodies are to cover a wide range of organisations, and therefore must be "non-political" in character so as to meet the objections of the Church, pacifist and middle class youth organisations who join them. Concessions will have to be made to their illusions, to the anti-socialist ideas of class-collaboration they profess. Revolutionary propaganda must be toned down, if not completely silenced, so as not to frighten them away.

To take an example: the League of Nations Union. Do we not seek

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to expose both the illusions of pacifism and the chauvinist pro-armament policies which contend within it—do we not seek to shatter the 'utopian' illusions with which it gulls large numbers of people? How then can we appear as the open allies of this body, as its 'guarantors' to the workers who have, to our knowledge, showed little interest or enthusiasm for it? How can we support a policy made up of extracts from its programme of non-class opposition to war?

Unity with all and sundry for 'Peace' in the abstract, on a policy suitable to non-working class organisations does not advance the struggle against capitalist war one inch. Rather does it prevent the workers from joining the class battle against the bourgeoisie, giving the 'Peace' societies wider backing and fostering belief in their policies. These 'Peace' organisations, who would be our 'allies' for the moment, would turn to the followers we had won for them as soon as war came and say: "You know how we have worked for Peace, even the Socialists and Communists recognised that. Now it is useless going on. Let us support the war."

An active, united effort by the Labour movement against the war policies of the government may bring into the campaign many of these 'Peace' organisations. But their members must be won for the policy of the workers' struggle, which they will not be by the workers making useless concessions to their policy.

### People's Fronts.

On a larger scale, in a more urgent situation, the Peoples' Fronts in France and Spain are open to similar objection. Here again we find unity of opposing class parties, unity based upon a liberal and reformist programme advocated by those politicians who in 1934 capitulated so shamefully before the fascist onslaught. These cowardly liberals who may hand over power to the Fascists at the appropriate hour if they are given the chance, are now heroes of the fight against fascism, certified genuine by the fact of the Peoples' Front.

A 'Left-Bloc' Government which is the aim of the Peoples' Front in France, and has actually been achieved by it in Spain, is a step forward only in so far as it is less capable of using the State power against the masses, becomes in fact the last capitalistic government, which, through its weakness, enables the workers to organise for its destruction.

But to organise the workers for the capture of power it is necessary to use the pre-election and the election period to detach the workers' organisations from the capitalist liberals, to draw the sharpest distinction between them; although in the struggle the two forces may be alongside, may appear to be fighting the same enemy. A glance back to the French election of 1924 may provide useful illustration. Then the Communists offered an electoral pact to the Socialists, but refused to extend it to the Radicals. Such we think would have been the policy most likely to create the conditions

for workers' power; agreement between Socialists and Communists, aim of a Socialist-Communist Government, accompanied by the creation of councils in town and village which would provide the embryonic organs of the workers' state power.

A vacillating Left-Bloc, without the clearest distinction made between the opposing interests of the workers and the capitalists, would be the very condition likely to clear the path for Fascism. Under capitalism in its decline such a government cannot fulfil its electoral promises without striking at capitalism itself, without pointing the way to workers' power. Is there anyone so ingenious as to believe that Daladier, Azaña, and the other liberal notabilities of the People's Front, could support such an eventuality? Is it not more likely that they would wriggle out of the embrace of their proletarian allies and move to the Right, so facilitating the fascist reaction?

## A NOTE ON THE FRENCH ELECTIONS.

After the conspicuous victory won by the working-class parties in Spain during February, which, if the timidity of the present leadership can be overcome, offers a promising development for the Spanish revolution, the French workers and peasants have followed suit by voting their full strength for the People's Front Parties in the General Election. In particular the Communist Party has gained enormously from the electoral pact and will have four or five times as many seats in the new Chamber as in the last. While it would be unwise to underestimate the growing radicalisation of the French masses now severely suffering under the blows of the belated economic crisis in that country, attention must be drawn to certain features of the electoral victory of a disquieting character.

It is agreed on all sides that the electoral programme of the People's Front was a typically reformist document, featuring amongst its points, State Control of the Banque de France, the 40 hour week, and support for the League of Nations. It is doubtful in the extreme whether French Capitalism in crisis can afford to make such concessions of a lasting nature to the workers. Now if ever is the time to prepare the workers for the frontal assault on capitalism. Hitherto an electoral campaign was regarded as part of such preparation by the French Communist Party. The last electoral battle has marked a definite change in their policy. The Communist slogans in the election were not those calculated to strengthen the workers for the capture of power. Indeed the meaningless "Les Soviets Partout" ("Form Soviets Everywhere") of two years ago was conveniently shelved to meet the scruples of the Radical-Socialists.

The Communists substituted for working-class slogans, national slogans, as for example "For a Free, Strong and Happy France," and by representing Hitler rather than French Capitalism as the chief enemy have dragged the workers a step further along the road of class-conciliation and the "Sacred Union" ostensibly in defence of the Soviet Union. Here, at least, the C.P.F., the

It may be asked: is it not necessary to make use of allies in the fight against a Fascist contingent? Certainly make use of allies, but at all times retain the political and organisational independence of the workers' parties, to aim, that is, at the strengthening of the class independence of the masses not at bolstering up the Liberal parties and creating the illusion that these weak, vacillating, pro-capitalist parties will actually fight and resist Fascism.

These criticisms of 'Popular Fronts' need serious consideration. In both France and Spain correct revolutionary policy will rapidly create the conditions under which the workers can seize power. That is why all revolutionaries will watch closely the developments in these two countries for the results of victory will be tremendous for the workers of the world. We hope, in our next issue, to examine the results of the French election and to deal more fully with the situation in Spain.

Socialist Party and the Radical-Socialists are united. The advent of an open clash between French and German Imperialism would probably see the Communists rallying to the colours for "National Defence."

On the question of "National Defence" the Socialist Party has already committed itself not once but a hundred times. The Socialists have not done quite so well at the polls as the Communists, although they have increased their total vote. They are now prepared to collaborate with the Radical-Socialists in forming a government, which the Communists will support. Another possibility which cannot be overlooked is that the present Sarraut cabinet may be reformed with a greater bias to the left to bank on support from the People's Front and the Centre.

We do not look for any effective leadership for the French workers from the Communist and Socialist Parties today. On the question of War they have already taken their stand on the side of French Imperialism. Nevertheless, the rank-and-file party members may push their leaders some little way. There is open criticism both of the C.P. and S.P. policies from within those parties by the "Que Faire" group in the former and the "Revolutionary Left" of Marceau Pivert in the latter.

Meanwhile, the Revolutionary Socialist Youth and the Bolshevik-Leninist Group are preparing for the formation of a new party on revolutionary lines. It is likely that they will attract large numbers from both of the mass parties once the glamour of the People's Front has worn off, and the harsh realities of a People's Front Government, i.e., a Radical Socialist Government become apparent.

In France as in all capitalist countries today the struggle between the workers and the fascist reactionaries enters upon a new and bitter phase. In the clash of forces that may not be so far distant we are confident that revolutionary tradition of the French workers will once more assert itself, this time victoriously.

April 30th, 1936.

## TROTSKY ON THE STALIN INTERVIEW.



In Stalin's interview with Roy Howard, the most important thing from a practical standpoint is the warning that the military intervention of the U.S.S.R. is inevitable in the event of an attack by Japan or the Mongolian People's Republic. Is this warning correct in the main? In our opinion, yes. It is correct not only because in question here is the defence of a weak state against a predatory imperialist beast—for if this alone were the guiding consideration, the U.S.S.R. would be constantly at war with all the imperialist countries of the world. The Soviet Union is too weak for such a task, and in this weakness, we might immediately add, lies the only justification for the "pacifism" of its Government.

But the question of Mongolia is a question of the most immediate strategic position of Japan in the war against the U.S.S.R. In this domain the limits of retreat must be resolutely fixed.

A few years ago the Soviet Union surrendered to Japan the Chinese Eastern railway, a position also of extreme strategic importance. At the time this action was acclaimed by the Communist International as a voluntary expression of pacifism. As a matter of fact, it was an act of compulsion due to weakness. The Comintern had ruined the Chinese revolution of 1925-1927 by its policy of the "National Front." This untied the hands of the imperialists. By surrendering an extremely important strategic line, the Soviet Government thereby facilitated for Japan her seizures in Northern China and her present assaults against Mongolia. It should now be clear even to the blind that abstract pacifism was not involved in the surrender of the railway (if that were really the case, it would have been merely an act of stupidity and betrayal); an unfavourable relation of forces: the Chinese revolution had been annihilated, while the Red Army and the Red Fleet were not ready for the struggle.

Now, the situation has so obviously improved, in a military sense, that the Soviet Government considers it possible to resort to a categorical veto on the question of Mongolia. We can only welcome the strengthening of the position of the U.S.S.R. in the Far East, as well as the more critical attitude on the part of the Soviet Government toward the ability of Japan, torn by contradictions, to wage a major, protracted war. It should be pointed out that the Soviet bureaucracy while it is very bold toward its own rulers, easily falls into a panic when faced with imperialist opponents: the petty-bourgeois is unceremonious when dealing with the proletariat, but stands ever in awe of the big bourgeois.

The official formula of the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R., widely advertised by the Comintern,

reads as follows: "We do not seek an inch of foreign soil, neither will we surrender an inch of our own." Yet, in the question of Mongolia, the defence of "our own soil" is not involved at all: Mongolia is an independent state. The defence of the revolution, as this small example

shows, is not reducible to the defence of the frontiers. The true method of defence consists in weakening the positions of imperialism and in strengthening the positions of the proletariat and of the colonial peoples in the entire world. An unfavourable relation of forces may compel, in the interests of saving the main base of the revolution, the surrender of many "inches" of soil to the enemy, as was the case in the epoch of Brest-Litovsk, and partly also in the case of the Chinese Eastern railway. And, on the contrary, a more favourable relation of forces places on the workers' state the duty to come to the assistance of the revolutionary movement in other countries, not only morally but also, if need be, with the assistance of armed force: *years of emancipation are an integral part of revolutions of emancipation.*

Thus, the experience with Mongolia shatters to pieces the ideology of conservative pacifism which bases itself upon historical frontiers, as though they were the Ten Commandments. The frontiers of the U.S.S.R. are only the temporary front line trenches of the class struggle. They lack even a national justification. The Ukrainian people—to take only one of many examples—is cut in two by the state boundary. Should favourable conditions arrive, the Red Army would be duty-bound to come to the aid of Western Ukraine which is under the heel of the Polish executioners. It is not difficult to imagine the gigantic impulse that would be given to the revolutionary movement in Poland and in the whole of Europe by the unification of a workers' and peasants' Ukraine. All state frontiers are only fetters upon the productive forces. The task of the proletariat is not to preserve the *status quo*, i.e., to perpetuate the frontiers, but on the contrary to work for their revolutionary elimination with the aim of creating the Socialist United States of Europe and of the entire world. But to make such an international policy possible, if not at present then in the future, it is imperative for the Soviet Union to free itself from the rule of the conservative bureaucracy with its religion of "socialism in one country."

### THE CAUSE OF WAR?

In reply to Howard's question as to what causes underlie the threat of war, Stalin said in accordance with tradition: "It lies in capitalism." As proof he cited the last war which "arose from the desire to divide the world." But

remarkably enough, no sooner does Stalin pass from the past to the present, from dim theoretical recollections to real politics, than capitalism immediately disappears, and in its place are to be found individual evil-minded cliques that are incapable of grasping the benefits of peace. To the question of whether war is inevitable, Stalin replies, "In my opinion the positions of the friends of peace are being strengthened. The friends of peace can work openly (!), they base themselves upon the force of public opinion, and they have at their disposal such instruments as, for example (!!!), the League of Nations. This is an asset for the friends of peace. . . as for the enemies of peace, they are compelled to work secretly. This is a liability for the enemies of peace. Incidentally, it is not excluded that precisely because of this (?) they may decide upon a military adventure as an act of despair."

Thus, we find that humanity is divided not into classes, nor into imperialist states warring with each other, but into "friends" and "enemies" of peace, i.e., into saints and sinners. The cause for war (at any rate, for future if not past wars) is not capitalism that breeds irreconcilable contradictions but the ill-will of the "enemies of peace" who "work secretly," while the French, British, Belgium and other slave-owners do their work in broad daylight. But precisely because the enemies of peace, like all evil spirits, work secretly, they may, in a fit of despair, plunge into an adventure. Who needs this philosophic mush? At best it can be of service only to some old ladies' pacifist society.

As we have had the occasion to state before, the agreement between the Soviets and France gives infinitely more guarantees to France than to the Soviets. In the negotiations with Paris, Moscow evinced a lack of firmness, or, to put it more bluntly, Laval fooled Stalin. The events in connection with the Rhineland are an indisputable confirmation that, with a more realistic appraisal of the situation, Moscow could have wrung from France much more serious guarantees, in so far as pacts in general can be considered as "guarantees" in the present epoch of sharp turns in the situation, of continuous crises, break-ups and regroupments. But as we have already said, the Soviet bureaucracy shows much greater firmness in the struggle against the advanced workers than in negotiations with bourgeois diplomats.

But, no matter how he might evaluate the Franco-Soviet pact, not a single serious minded proletarian revolutionist ever denied or denies the right of the Soviet state to seek for an auxiliary support for its inviolability through a temporary agreement with the French or some other imperialism. For this purpose, however, there is not the slightest need to call black white and to rebaptize bloody brigands as "friends of peace." As an example to be emulated one might take, let us say, the new ally, the French bourgeoisie: in concluding the agreement with the Soviets the French bourgeoisie presents this action very soberly without becoming lyrical, without lavishing any compliments and even maintaining a constant undertone of warning

against the Soviet Government. However bitter it may be, it is necessary to speak the truth. Laval, Sarraut, and their associates have shown a great deal more firmness and dignity in defending the interests of the bourgeois state than did Stalin and Litvinov in the service of the workers' state.

Assuredly, it is difficult to conceive a more vicious stupidity than that which divides the world brigands into friends and enemies of peace! One could still speak, in a certain sense, about the friends and enemies of *status quo*: but these are two entirely different things. *Status quo* is not the organisation of "peace," but the organisation of the infamous oppression exercised by a minority over the overwhelming majority of mankind. *Status quo* is being maintained by means of constant warfare within the sacred boundaries and beyond their precincts (England—in India and Egypt; France—in Syria; De La Rocque—in France). The difference between the two camps, which are, besides, very unstable, consists in the fact that some of the brigands think it more advisable already today to maintain the existing boundaries of oppression and enslavement with arms in hand, whereas others would prefer to blow up these boundaries sooner. This correlation of appetites and plans is in itself continually changing. Italy favours a *status quo* in Europe but not in Africa; yet every assault upon the boundaries in Africa is immediately reflected in Europe. Hitler decided to send troops into the Rhineland only because Mussolini had succeeded in slaughtering several thousand Abyssinians. Where should we enroll Italy: among the friends or the enemies of peace? And yet, France cherishes the friendship with Italy infinitely more than the friendship with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, England is courting the friendship of Germany.

The "friends of peace" work in the open (who would have thought it!) and have at their disposal "such instruments as, for example, the League of Nations." What other "instruments" have the friends of peace, outside the League of Nations? Obviously, they have the Comintern and the Amsterdam-Pleyel Committee. Stalin failed to mention these auxiliary "instruments" partly because he himself does not attach any great importance to them, and partly because he did not want to frighten his interlocutor unnecessarily. But Stalin does transform completely the League of Nations, whose nose has caved in, in the full view of all mankind, into a bulwark of peace, the prop and hope of nations.

In order to utilize the imperialist antagonisms between France and Germany there was not and is not the slightest need for idealizing the bourgeois ally or the particular combination of imperialists that temporarily screens itself by the sign of the League of Nations. The crime does not lie in this or another practical deal concluded with imperialists but in the fact that both the Soviet government and the Comintern are dishonestly embellishing their episodic allies and their League; are duping the workers with slogans of disarmament and "collective security"; and thereby are transformed

continued on page 4, column 2.

## Some Notes on the History of Bolshevism.

(In their efforts to justify non-revolutionary policies and actions, the leaders of the Comintern do not hesitate to falsify the history and corrupt the literature of Communism.)

We publish below the first of a series of notes on Ralph Fox's "Lenin." Written some time ago by Harry Wicks, these comments constitute a useful contribution to the much-needed check-up and connection of those works which are put across the workers as historical and factual studies.)

### The Stalinist Conception of History.

A decade ago, in September, 1924, Leon Trotsky directed the attention of the Party and the Communist International to a "deplorable blank" in Communist literature: the absence of a scientific study of the immediate preparation, accomplishment and consolidation of the October Revolution. His preface, "The Need to Study October," roused a hornet's nest, and the era of "The Errors of Trotskyism" was opened. To-day, little of that vast literature which aimed at filling the "blank" remains extant, and most of its authors are politically dead. J. R. Campbell—writing in the "Communist Review" of January, 1934, of the very considerable study of the Russian Revolution by the British workers in recent years—laments "unfortunately the easiest obtained general survey of that event is Trotsky's History." In Campbell's circumspect comment, the bankruptcy of the "official" party historians is laid bare. This confession of Campbell's registers, during the 17th Anniversary of the October Revolution, the failure of the historical and scientific institutions of the Communist International to produce a standard and lasting account of 1917. How can this failure be explained? The literary legacy of Lenin provides the Communist historian with an admirable compass, not only for the study of October, but for the entire development of Bolshevism. But to this Leninist compass has been added—in the post-Lenin period—a second instrument: the magnet of the Stalinist general line. It is the employment of this Stalinist magnet that is the key to the contradiction which has involved all the party "official" historians. The compass is rendered useless when influenced by the magnet at its side. An editor of Lenin's collected works, a professor of Leninism at the International Lenin School, in a penitent mood evidenced the existence of this contradiction:—

"In bringing out," said Mintz, "one or another fact, we approached the matter (i.e., the official history of the C.P.S.U.) not from the point of view of political expediency but from the point of view of that objectivity which is totally uncharacteristic of our political history..." This apology for deviation from the path of political expediency is the most convincing possible exposure of the methods such historians employ, and of the ephemeral nature of their historical work. This political-expediency criterion not only influences young historians, but is also applied to the publication of Lenin's works.

The recently published volume of Stalin's writings on October gives a 1924 document which helps to illustrate this. In 1924, Stalin undertook the defence of Kamenev and Zinoviev; and ridiculed the suggestion that in the Bolshevik Party before the October Revolution there was a right wing or any danger of a split on the question of the uprising. But immediately the trio—Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin parted company and that defence was abandoned, the archives were opened, and Lenin's letters to the Central Committee denouncing Kamenev and Zinoviev and referring to "the threatening split" over the uprising, were published for the first time; ten years after they were written!

The Dutt, Minsky and Fox biographies of Lenin bear, each in its way, the stamp of the political-expediency method. Each subordinates its account of the life and work of Lenin to the duty of conforming with Stalin's General Line. These notes have been limited to Fox's book, because that is the most outrageous of all the efforts to distort the history of Bolshevism by means of a biography of Lenin.

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## TROTSKY ON THE STALIN INTERVIEW. Continued from page 3.

in action into the political agency of imperialists in relation to the working masses.

The programme of the Bolshevik party drafted by Lenin in 1919 replied to all these questions with remarkable clarity and simplicity. But who thinks about this document in the Kremlin? Today, Stalin and Co. find embarrassing even the eclectic programme of the Comintern compiled by Bukharin in 1928. For this reason we think it useful to quote from the programme of the Bolshevik party on the question of the League of Nations and the friends of peace. Here is what it states:

"The growing pressure on the part of the proletariat and especially the victories gained by the latter in various countries tend to increase the resistance of the exploiters and engender on their part the creation of new forms of the international unification of the capitalists (League of Nations, etc.), which, while organising on a world scale the systematic exploitation of all the peoples on earth, aim their immediate efforts toward the direct suppression of the revolutionary movements of the proletariat in all countries.

"All this inevitably leads to the correlation of the civil war within the individual states with the revolutionary wars both of the proletarian countries defending themselves as well of the oppressed peoples struggling against the yoke of the imperialist powers.

"Under these conditions the slogans of pacifism, of international disarmament under capitalism, of arbitration courts, and so on are not only a reactionary Utopia but also a downright swindle of the toilers aimed to disarm the proletariat and to distract the workers away from the task of disarming the exploiters."

It is precisely this criminal work that both Stalin and the Comintern are fulfilling: they are sowing reactionary Utopias, swindling the toilers, disarming the proletariat.

### THE "COMIC MISUNDERSTANDING."

Nobody compelled Stalin to satisfy Howard's thirst for knowledge on the question of the world revolution. If Stalin gave the interview as the unofficial head of the Government (and this is indicated by his statement with regard to Mongolia), then he could have simply referred his interlocutor to Dimitroff on the questions of the world revolution. But no, Stalin went into explanations. At first sight it appears entirely incomprehensible why he should have thereby compromised himself so cruelly by his cynical and, sad to say, not at all clever disquisitions about the world revolution. But he is driven on to the slippery road by an insurmountable need: he must break with the past.

What about the plans and intentions relating to the revolution? asks the visitor.

"We never (!) had such plans and intentions."

But, what about...

"This is all the result of a misunderstanding."

Howard: "A tragic misunderstanding."

Stalin: "No, a comic, or, perhaps, a tragi-comical one."

It is embarrassing even to read

and transcribe these lines, they are so inappropriate and indecent. For whom is this... wisdom intended? Even the pacifist ladies will reject it.

Asks Stalin: "What danger can the neighbouring states see in the ideas of the Soviet people, if these states are really firmly placed in the saddle?" Very well, permit us to ask, what about those who are not placed firmly in the saddle? Yet, that is how matters stand in reality. Precisely because its position is precarious, the bourgeoisie fears Soviet ideas, not Stalin's ideas but those ideas that led to the creation of the Soviet state. To soothe the bourgeoisie, Stalin adduces a supplementary argument: "The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country, should it so desire, will itself achieve its own revolution, and if it does not desire it, there will be no revolution. Now, for example, our country desired to make a revolution and made it..." And more of the same, in the self same, smug, edifying tone. From the theory of socialism in one country Stalin has completely and decisively passed over to the theory of revolution in one country. If a "country" so desires—it will make it, should it not desire it—it won't make it. Now, "we," for example, desired it...

But before desiring it, "we" imported the ideas of Marxism from other countries and made use of foreign revolutionary experience. In the course of decades, "we" had our emigre organisation in other countries which directed the revolutionary struggle in Russia. In order to give a methodic and an active character to the exchange of experience between countries and their mutual revolutionary support, "we" organised the Communist International in the year 1919. "We" more than once proclaimed as the duty of the proletariat of a victorious country to come to the assistance of the rising peoples—with advice, material means, and, if possible, with armed force. All these ideas (incidentally, they bear the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxembourg, Liebknecht) are written down in the most important programmatic documents of the Bolshevik party and of the Comintern. Stalin has proclaimed that all this is a misunderstanding! A tragic one? No, a comic one. Not for nothing has Stalin recently announced that it has become "merry" to live in the Soviet Union: now even the Communist International has become transformed from a serious personage into a comedian. And how could it be otherwise, if the international character of the revolution is mere and sheer "nonsense"?

Stalin would have made a much more convincing impression upon his interlocutor, if instead of impotently calumniating the past ("we never had such plans and intentions"), he had on the contrary openly counterposed his own policy to the antiquated "plans and intentions" which have been relegated to the museum. Stalin might have read Howard the very same quotation from the programme which we gave above, and then made approximately the following brief speech. "In the eyes of Lenin the League of Nations was an organisation for the bloody suppression of the toilers. But we see in it—"

continued at foot of column 4.

## KARL MARX.

By FRANZ MEHRING (John Lane, 15/-)

Franz Mehring fought by the side of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, not only in the pre-war struggles against the Social-democratic corruption of Marxism but also in the sterner and braver battle against German militarism. The German Social-democratic Party leaders supported the war; Mehring, nearing his seventieth year when the war broke out, helped form the Spartacus League and to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism.

During the war Rosa Luxemburg wrote to Mehring, on his seventieth birthday: "When the spirit of socialism once again enters the ranks of the German proletariat the latter's first act will be to reach for your books, to enjoy the fruits of your life work." Mehring died in 1919, aged seventy-three, a few days after the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

This life of Marx is regarded as Mehring's finest achievement. Reading it today, eighteen years after its publication in Germany, it impresses itself upon the reader as one of the greatest literary achievements of German Social-democracy, with all the limitations of the time but yet far in advance of anything else of its kind. In this connection it is interesting to note that aspects of Marxism which today are furiously debated, such as the role of the State and the dictatorship of the proletariat, receive but passing reference whilst much space is devoted to those questions hotly disputed in pre-war days in the German Social-democracy.

Mehring came to Marxism through Lassalle; like many others he saw more closely, and was affected in a personal way by, the great pioneering work done by Lassalle and felt that Marx was unjust in his criticism. A useful appendix brings forward evidence, discovered since Mehring's death, showing how justified was Marx in his attack upon the actions and policies of Lassalle and his followers. Even so one feels, reading this book, that the evidence would not have altered Mehring's standpoint. More difficult to understand is Mehring's criticism of Marx for his attacks on Bakunin.

These shortcomings, however, should not prevent revolutionary socialists from getting this book. Reading it for the first time one realises how much subsequent biographies owe to this book and how even so none have ever equalled this full, beautifully written, and moving life story of the greatest revolutionary of all time.

We urge all our readers to get this book.

continued from column 3.

instrument of peace. Lenin spoke of the inevitability of revolutionary wars. But we consider the export of revolution—nonsense. Lenin branded the alliance between the proletariat and the national bourgeoisie as a betrayal. But we are doing all in our power to drive the French proletariat on to this road. Lenin lashed the slogan of disarmament under capitalism as an infamous swindle of the toilers. But we build our entire policy upon this slogan. Your comical misunderstanding"—that is how Stalin could have concluded—"consists in the fact that you take us for the continuators of Bolshevism, whereas we are its gravediggers."

Such an explanation would have dispelled the last shreds of suspicion of the world bourgeoisie and would have definitely established Stalin's reputation as a statesman. Unfortunately, he does not dare as yet to resort to such frank language. The past binds him, the traditions hamper him, the phantom of the Opposition frightens him. We come to the assistance of Stalin. In accordance with our rule, in the given case, too, we openly say what is.

March 18th, 1936.

Printed by Lucking & Son (T.U.), Tongham, Surrey, and Published for the Marxist League by H. Boyd, 238 Edgeware Road, W.2.