

THE RED FLAG

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PRICE ONE PENNY

WHAT PRICE UNITY?

An Open Letter to Fenner Brockway. A reply to recent attacks and some questions on the secret Unity agreement between the I.L.P., the C.P. and the Socialist League

By STEWART PURKIS

DEAR FENNER BROCKWAY,

On November 27th I took part in a confidential and friendly interview between yourself and a few "Trotskyist" sympathisers: on December 4th I read your *New Leader* article: "How Can We Get Unity?" in which you use our interview as a peg on which to hang an attack on all "Trotskyists."

True, you write that "Trotskyists" hold a truth; but you condemn them as "everywhere a source of mischief in the working class movement"—"destroyers not builders"—"conspiratorial cliques in whatever party they attach themselves to."

You judge this due to "Trotskyists not relating their truth to the whole truth"—"seeing only the crimes of the Stalinist bureaucracy" . . . not relating these "either to the biggest fact in history—the Soviet Revolution" or "to the supreme necessity of mobilising the working class movement of the world behind Soviet Russia in the course which it is taking in Spain."

TROTSKY and UNITY

What is it that occasions your oddly ill-timed attack? How is it that you, who for many years has specialised in goodwill, comradeship, and "understanding," choose this moment to condemn those who are influenced by Trotsky's ideas? How is it you do so in a unity article?

On the question of the united action of the working class organisations, no one, throughout the last ten years, has given so well considered or so clear a lead as Trotsky.

On the basic issue which divides Communists—"Socialism in One Country" or "World Revolution"—Trotsky, in throwing his emphasis on World Revolution, stands for the united front of the working class organisations throughout the world.

Compare Trotsky's line on the German events with that of the Comintern. History demonstrates that Trotsky and his followers were as wholeheartedly for the united front of the workers' organisations as the Comintern and the Social Democratic leaderships were against it.

Trotsky carried on over many years a campaign against the line of the social democratic leaders and against the C.I.'s theory of Social-Fascism; against the R.I.L.U.'s efforts to build the Red Trade Unions (which split the industrial unity of the German workers); and against Stalin's united front wrecking theory "Social Democracy and Fascism are twins." He consistently stood for an organizational compact between the social democratic and Communist parties on measures to bar Hitler's coming to power.

Or test Trotsky's line by his policy on the events in Spain. In 1931, when the Comintern either disregarded Spanish events or condemned any united front, other than the splitting red united front from below, Trotsky stood not for a deal between the leaders from above, but for a principled effecting of a united front compact between the organisations of the Spanish workers (see his pamphlet *The Revolution in Spain*, 1931).

On the outstanding issues of Germany and Spain, do not you admit that Trotsky has a

second-to-none record of service to the United Front?

'TROTSKYISTS' and UNITY

So far as "Trotskyists" are concerned, your general condemnation of them is equally unjustified. The group which interviewed you are all influenced by Trotsky's thought, and to that extent is 'Trotskyist.'

EDITOR'S COMMENT

Stewart Purkis, formerly a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain, is an Executive Committee member of the Railway Clerks Association and President of the St. Pancras Trades Council.

Although not a member of the Marxist League, Comrade Purkis has been actively associated with recent efforts to secure an international labour enquiry into the Moscow Trial and it was in his capacity as a member of the Trotsky Defence Committee that he was present at the interview with Brockway to which reference is made in this article.

We do not agree with all that Comrade Purkis says in his "open letter," but we endorse wholeheartedly the criticisms made of those so-called "revolutionary Socialists" who have lately concluded an agreement based upon united action among themselves and with the C.P.G.B. which has been completely concealed from their members and will only reach them as a fait accompli.

The Brockway outbursts against "Trotskyists" are aimed at side tracking likely criticism from the I.L.P. membership.

We came together in 1930, brought together by agreement on the need for propaganda for the United Front. At that time any idea of united action by the working-class organisations was condemned throughout the comintern.

But Trotsky's case for the United Front of the Workers' Organizations as the only means of stopping Hitler's rise to power—so impressed us that we broke through C.P.G.B. discipline, translated and published Trotsky's "Open Letter to a German Worker," and "The Only Road," and circulated them amongst the party membership.

For this offence we were expelled from the Party. Willie Gallacher designed a "political epitaph" for us. It can be read in the *Daily Worker* file. He declared that those who propose an agreement with social-democratic organizations were guilty of an act of treachery to the working-class.

Since then, in our varying spheres of political and trade union work we have done our best—basing ourselves on Trotsky's writing, on the early C.I. Congresses, and on Lenin's tactical pamphlet "Left-Wing Communism"—to secure a united front of the working-class organizations, on all points of agreement, which respects principled points of difference.

Our record is such that we resent your use of a discussion with us, as a peg on which to hang charges against 'Trotskyists' of "con-

spiratorial cliquism" and "everywhere a source of mischief in the working-class movement."

SPAIN and 'TROTSKYISM'

Particularly do we resent your charges against our Spanish comrades (who are either under Trotsky's leadership or influenced by him) whom, at such a time as this, you charge with rendering less effective the workers' side in the class struggle.

We do not know what influences you so to write of them. But the gallantry displayed by the 'Trotskyists' in P.O.U.M. and the heroism with which their lives have been given in a living, battling, united-front against Franco, answers your charges.

You claim that it is not because you reject Trotsky's ideas that you condemn 'Trotskyists.'

You declare you "share their criticism of the 'Socialism in One Country' line" and even "of the foreign policy which reflects it." You claim to "recognize the danger of a transitional revolutionary dictatorship becoming a continuing bureaucracy." You share "their disbelief in the Moscow Trial charges, and the branding of Trotsky as an ally of the Hitler Secret Service."

Your difference with "Trotskyists" is not then on the question of their "harbouring dangerous (Trotskyist) thought"; it cannot be that you consider them opposed to the United Front tactic. The publication by your own organization of Trotsky's Copenhagen speech on "The Russian Revolution," and Maxton's commendatory preface to it, makes it difficult to follow what you mean about "Trotskyists not relating their truth . . . to the bigger fact in history—the Soviet Revolution. The clear point of difference remaining is your charge that Trotskyists "do not relate their truth to the necessity of mobilizing . . . behind Soviet Russia in the course which it is taking in Spain."

This specific instance on which you demand unity does not bring home to us any "sense of sin against solidarity."

We, like you, have stood side by side against the means test, against Mosley, and his East End marches, and for the lifting of the embargo on arms for the Spanish Workers, for support of their struggle.

But you demand something other than this—we must "mobilize behind Soviet Russia" in its course in Spain and the consequences. So, although you declare that you "share the 'Trotskyist' criticism of the Socialism in One Country" line and the foreign policy which reflects it, you make support of the foreign policy of those who hold that theory—the acid test of a good revolutionary. You view support of the foreign policy of Russia in Spain as essential from those who would "relate their truth to all the truth."

On this issue, the decisions of the Brussels Congress, organised by the International Bureau, are of great interest.

REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST CONGRESS and UNITY

From the report of the Congress given in the December issue of "Controversy" we learn:—

(a) *The Congress . . . took special note of the fact that it was the French Popular Front Government that took the initiative in enforcing the*

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THE NOVOSIBIRSK TRIAL

By HENRY SARA

Another Russian Trial. Once again the ugly head of Trotskyism makes its appearance in the Soviet Union in a campaign of plotting, wrecking, and murder, says the Stalinist press. On this occasion the Trial was held away in the regions of Siberia. This time it was to deal with the investigation of plots on the life of Molotov, the President of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union, who was to be murdered in a mine, or involved in a motor-car accident. But the murder "did not come off," and the car "travelled too slowly," although "there was a terrorist at the wheel."

To say the least it is rather strange that Molotov looms in the news connected with terrorists, for he was not mentioned in the recent Moscow Trial. Did the terrorists forget him? Is it possible that a large centre was built up by Zinovievists and Trotskyites to wipe out the Soviet leaders, yet they did their job so badly that they completely overlooked one of the most prominent among the public officials?

That certainly was a puzzle that needed solving, but the pages of the report of the Moscow Trial gave no solution to the mystery. What made it more mysterious still was the fact that in the indictment drawn up in Leningrad on December 25th, 1934, Molotov's name stood out conspicuously directly following that of the name of the "beloved leader," Stalin. But although the Moscow Trial was alleged to be merely a continuation of the Kirov Murder Trial held in Leningrad in 1935, everybody seemed implicated in a conspiracy of silence in connection with the name of President Molotov during the whole of the Trial in Moscow 1936. Apparently none of the accused so much as whispered his name, and the Public Prosecutor, the valiant Vishinsky, who laboured with so much energy to elicit from all the prisoners who was to murder whom never once uttered the name of such an important Soviet official as Molotov.

There was a rumour in circulation to the effect that during the recent Moscow Trial he was under a cloud and out of favour for some reason or other. Presumably the cloud has now blown over, which means that Molotov has toed the line, so they give him all the prominence connected with "what never happened." True, it was not a Moscow Trial, only those well in favour can expect that much publicity, so he had to be content with a less important event staged out in the Siberian wilds, where local men covered the story.

How conveniently these plotters do their job. How well they fit in with the wishes of the Government in this game of who is to murder whom. In itself it is quite an interesting subject, but enough has been said to enable the reader to form his own conclusions in these methods of frame-ups.

Before making an examination of the recent events at Novosibirsk it is worth calling attention to the

infamous way in which the Moscow Trial has been reported. At this late date it is justifiable to condemn the lack of material concerning the Indictment, the evidence of the Accused, and their final Speeches. There is a general impression that a full Report of the Moscow Trial is obtainable in English in this country, specially translated and sent over from Russia for the benefit of the working-class movement. That is quite incorrect. So far, English readers have had to be content with a very brief account of the Trial, so pieced together and edited as to distort the view point of the accused by extracts and snippets, the whole effect of which is to leave the reader not with an *understanding* of the affair, but bewilderment. And to increase the difficulty in this matter a still more imperfect account has been put into circulation by the Anglo-Russian Parliamentary Committee which contains a foreword by Mr. D. N. Pritt, who says that public opinion in order to reach a verdict must be *properly informed of the facts*. Quite so, but how can the public be properly informed of the facts if the facts are not presented to them.

Full Reports?

Mr. Pritt says: "Full reports of the case are not available to all." To all? It would be more correct to say, that a full report of the case is not available, and leave it at that, without tacking on the word all. He then says: "and when they are, they are sometimes too long for hard-working people to read carefully." Is this the legal mind at work? If the report in full is not available it cannot be too long for hard-working people to read either carefully or carelessly. And the Report is not available in a verbatim form. *To that extent therefore public opinion in this country is not properly informed on the Moscow Trial.* If that is the case in the Moscow Trial how much worse off is public opinion likely to be in regard to the Trial at Novosibirsk? There are so many arrests reported taking place in Russia that it is becoming extremely difficult to keep track of them. How many people are awaiting trial is beyond count. And how many people are serving sentences baffles estimation. In the Novosibirsk trial, as in the Moscow trial, witnesses are brought in who testify against the accused, but they themselves are usually awaiting trial, on "another charge," says the report drily.

From newspaper accounts it would seem that arrests were made on November 11th, at Novosibirsk, of nine people, some Russian, some German, all charged with Trotskyism, all implicated in a plot for wrecking works, mines, and other acts aimed at destroying progress in the Soviet Union, either directly or indirectly, at the instigation of Leon Trotsky. Official accounts appeared in the *Daily Worker* and in International Press Correspondence screaming against Trotsky.

This is not new, but new tactics

have been adopted. The Moscow Trial fell flat, it never made the impression upon the average worker that its sponsors expected of it. At first, the charges of the attempts upon the life of Stalin were met with incredulity, but, nevertheless, with some misgiving. But when the Soviet authorities went on to include the names of a whole host of leaders whose lives, too, were threatened, and not only threatened, but upon whom attempts, it was said, were actually carried out, the only effect of all this heavy propaganda was to cause astonishment and a point blank refusal on the part of all sensible people to believe the extravagant story.

There is no need here to deal with all the occasions when the groups of assassins, bloodthirsty wretches who would stop at nothing, as their prosecutors painted them, consistently missed their targets. Commonsense ruled out the argument. So now in this new trial different tactics have been called into play. Only one plan for assassination is staged—the murder of Molotov. The other scheme involved the death of workers. It is actually suggested that Leon Trotsky is responsible for a plot in Russia whereby miners have lost their lives, or to put it in the words of the *Daily Worker*, November 23rd, "they were out to kill miners to cause discontent."

This is the new technique; where formerly charges against alleged Trotskyists of individual terror against the Soviet bosses failed in its purpose of political propaganda against Trotskyism, now it is a case of making the net wider, Trotskyism means the murdering of workers. Dastardly as were the earlier charges this last campaign is even more foul.

In this trial, as in the Moscow trial, no Trotskyists were before the Court. When the prosecutor Roginsky tried to make up a fake case of evidence against old associates of Trotsky, or one time associates, he blundered badly. In every way, personally, historically, chronologically, he failed to substantiate his charges. Neither the *Daily Worker* nor *Inpreccor* shows the slightest intelligence regarding the Russian opposition with which Leon Trotsky was formally connected. Like the gaugs who used to concoct anti-Soviet forgeries with faked documents for circulation in the capitalist press, their work teems with stupid errors.

For instance, throughout this trial at Novosibirsk the name of Piatakov was spoken of as one the chief instigators of the crimes which took place in Siberia. He is referred to "as the most intimate assistant of Trotsky," "Piatakov, member of the All-Union Trotskyist Centre and closest collaborator of Trotsky," etc., etc.

As a matter of fact years have passed since it was possible to speak of Piatakov collaborating with Trotsky. From 1923 to 1928 Piatakov was in the opposition with Trotsky but he recanted and signed a statement to that effect. Many times since then Trotsky has warned Piatakov of the rashness of his course—which by the way it is necessary to point out was towards Stalin and not against him—Trotsky forewarned him of his fate in coming to terms with the bureaucracy. For the Stalinist press to depict Piatakov

as Trotsky's "most intimate assistant," provides ample evidence, if any were needed, of the Novosibirsk Trial being another frame up.

It is interesting to recall what Lenin wrote of Piatakov: "a man undoubtedly distinguished in will and ability, but too much given over to administration and the administrative side of things to be relied on in a serious political question." Now the Stalinists ask the working class to believe that that will and ability have been directed towards the gassing of mine workers in the Soviet Union—because Socialism under Stalin is making unbounded progress!

Who is Muralov?

Another figure mentioned in the trial at Novosibirsk was that of Muralov. As far as it is possible to ascertain, Muralov has never capitulated. For many years now he has been in Siberia—a prisoner defying the hardships forced upon him by the Stalinist bureaucracy. He is alleged to have been the responsible instructor of the men who were to see that the crimes were carried out, and when they failed in their task and made their report of their inability to commit the crime of killing Molotov he is alleged to have called them "a crowd of blockheads and cowards." A careful reading of the career of Muralov would suggest that he was the type of man who, once he convinced himself of the need for political assassination, would straight away go out and do the deed himself. But there is absolutely nothing to suggest that Muralov has ever forsaken his Bolshevism. A great deal more evidence will have to be produced by the Prosecutor Roginsky to prove that Muralov is in any way connected with the Fascists, Gestapo, or advocates of intervention in Russia, before people, with ordinary common sense, and a slight acquaintance with Muralov's past splendid record, are likely to pay any attention to the amazing charges levelled against this "Old Bolshevik."

Of course, as in all these cases against their political opponents, the Stalinists claim that this case is proved by the confessions of the accused. Once more the argument is advanced that if the men were not guilty why did they confess? In the present case the paucity of the material is so much worse than even that of the Moscow Trial.

The one definite instance given is that of the attempt on the life of Molotov. When it occurred "the terrorist Arnold took the wheel as chauffeur. But was Arnold on trial? No. Who was he? "A terrorist!" What is to be understood by that. Is there any evidence that he ever advocated terror, did he write, or did he talk? Dean Inge has said in this country that certain people, who have advocated opinions with which he is not in agreement, ought to be shot. Would that sort of thing in Russia mean that he would be described as a terrorist? Or has "Arnold" actually committed deeds which come under the category of murder? No information is offered in the reports put out by the Stalinists. "Arnold" drove the car so slowly that it turned over. In fact the actual words used in *Inpreccor* are "As a result of the car's travelling too slowly it merely turned over, however, and the accident did not

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Blow at the Spanish Workers' United Front

Filthy Lies and Slanders against Spanish Revolutionaries

Why has the I.L.P. been silent ?

"You must unmask the leaders of the P.O.U.M. as agents provocateurs . . ."

The above is taken from a circular issued by the P.S.U.C. in Barcelona. It is typical of the violent, unscrupulous and hideous campaign now being waged by the P.S.U.C. the Communist Party of Spain, and the Soviet Government against the P.O.U.M.

The Red Flag feels that it is necessary to draw the attention of its readers to this campaign. We feel that if allowed to continue it will break the unity of the Spanish workers against Fascism and do irreparable damage to the cause of the workers the world over. No other workers' paper in this country has yet printed the facts set out below, facts sufficiently serious to cause concern to every revolutionary worker. That the *New Leader* remains silent and makes no exposure of the campaign, nor raises its voice in defence of the P.O.U.M. shows the real meaning of the "Unity" agreement with which we deal elsewhere in this issue.

The Communist Party of Spain; the unified Socialist and Communist Party of Catalonia (affiliated to the C.I.) now known as the P.S.U.C.; the Russian press; and the representatives of the Russian Government have joined in an unparalleled campaign of vilification aimed at the Workers' Party of Marxist Unity (P.O.U.M.).

The P.O.U.M. is a party formed not many months before the present civil war, and was an amalgamation of the Catalan Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, a breakaway from the Spanish Communist Party, led by Joaquin Maurin, and the Left Opposition (Trotskyists) led by Andres Nin. Its main strength has always been in Catalonia.

From the beginning of the civil war the P.O.U.M. took up a political standpoint at variance with the policies of the Socialist and Communist Parties. It argued that the total defeat of Fascism and the destruction of all forms of capitalist exploitation went hand in hand, and that to achieve this the workers and peasants must take complete power through Soviets. The Communist and Socialist Parties stood, and still stand, for winning the war in alliance with capitalist republican and liberal parties and establishing a liberal democracy within which framework ordinary capitalist exploitation will continue.

In spite of these disagreements, however, the P.O.U.M. has shared the common struggle against Fascism. Indeed, many of its friends have criticised it because it made so many concessions to the demands of the other parties. But whilst this may be so, nevertheless the P.O.U.M. has continued its propaganda for working class power; it is against this propaganda that the present campaign is aimed.

At the beginning of the civil war, P.O.U.M. had 8,000 members. In the last few months it has had over 70,000 applications for membership, and, today, it has a membership of

45,000 based upon rigid selection from these applications. Its central organ, *La Batalla*, has a daily circulation of 30,000 in Barcelona alone. It has four other daily papers in different parts of Spain and many weekly and monthly papers, including an English Bulletin (*The Spanish Revolution*), the last seven numbers of which have been prevented from entering this country.

Several thousand P.O.U.M. members are fighting at the front against Franco's troops. Hundreds of its members have given their lives. Maurin, outstanding figure in the Spanish revolutionary movement since the war and a well known figure in the European movement, late General Secretary of P.O.U.M., was executed by Franco's troops not many weeks ago.

The P.O.U.M., then, has grown in influence and strength and played its full part in the struggle against Franco; but it is objected to because it keeps its own revolutionary point of view before the workers. In this it is no different from any other section of the Spanish anti Fascist front: the Communists, the Socialists, and the Liberals maintain their propaganda for "Democracy"—indeed, it is precisely because the P.O.U.M. will not fall in behind this policy that it is now being subjected to one of the most hideous campaigns of slander ever waged in the Labour Movement, a campaign only comparable to that waged in Russia by the reactionaries against the Bolsheviks in 1917, when they were described as "German agents."

The campaign of the P.S.U.C. and the Soviet Government attained its first objective when the Catalan Government was reformed and the P.O.U.M. excluded. The new Government was formed on the basis of the Trade Unions—that at least was the excuse for the exclusion of the P.O.U.M. But, as the P.O.U.M. newspapers point out, the Liberals are still represented, and the representatives of the U.G.T. Socialist Unions) are in reality prominent leaders of the Comintern-affiliated P.S.U.C. There is no doubt that the decisive factor in securing the exclusion of the P.O.U.M. from the Catalan Government, as in the case of the Madrid Defence Committee some weeks earlier, was the pressure from the Russian representatives.

In its issue of December 2nd *La Batalla* quotes from a circular sent out by the Secretary of the P.S.U.C. to all sections. This circular declares that the P.O.U.M. occupies a counter-revolutionary role, that the policy of the P.O.U.M. co-incides with the provocative politics of international Fascism; that the P.O.U.M. maintains contact with the Gestapo and that "all members of the Party must understand the criminal role played by the P.O.U.M." The final paragraph of this circular is as follows:—

"You must unmask the leaders of the P.O.U.M. as agent-provocateurs penetrating among the working-class in order to lead it to ruin, and present them as such before the masses. We hope that

you will fully discuss this question and that your resolutions will be firm and precise as befits a party of Steel."

Among the demands of the P.S.U.C. was that for the suppression of P.O.U.M.'s newspapers and propaganda. The Anarcho-Syndicalists objected to this and, for the time being, prevented it being carried into effect. The Syndicalists have, up to now, shown no inclination to join in this campaign: on the contrary their newspapers have protested against a campaign directed against those who are fighting so valiantly on the different fronts against Fascism.

It will, undoubtedly, interest the I.L.P. to know that the recent Brussels Conference of Left Parties, in which the I.L.P. took active part, has also been characterised by the P.S.U.C. as "Fascist provocation." We quote from *Treball* (13/11/36):—

"A few small groups, without any serious political leaders, have united at Brussels under pretext of holding a Conference of so-called Aid for Spain, but in reality to organise a campaign of calumny against the Soviet Union and the Third International, and its sections which are helping us in our struggle against Fascism. Under cover of "revolutionary" phrases this Conference (at which was represented that group of Trotskyists which, when the enemy were at the gates of Madrid, dedicated five articles to an attack on the Soviet Union, the C.P. of Spain which is fighting with such self-sacrifice in the front-line trenches, and in general all those organisations which are not in agreement with its provocative tactics) has adopted no other conclusions than those which will weaken the anti-fascist front, conclusions which favour Fascism and are against the U.S.S.R. and the Comintern and against the Spanish people in their stern struggle for liberty.

International Fascism is attempting to bring to a head its intervention against our people, to isolate us internationally from the great masses of the petit-bourgeoisie and democracy by means of falsifying facts, inventing calumnies and saying that Spain is fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

But the undeniable fact is that Spanish Fascism, aided by Fascist Germany, Italy and Portugal, has attacked the Spanish people and Republic, in order to destroy it and assure its own domination over our country and to gain an advantageous position for the launching of world war against the democratic and liberal minded countries and against the U.S.S.R.

This is so obvious that only "provocateurs" and agents of the counter-revolution cannot see it.

Our people have been attacked by Fascism and to defend themselves from this criminal assault all who do not wish to see the Spanish people oppressed and do not wish to be slaves are struggling in a broad Anti fascist Front, united by a common cause and laying aside ideological differences.

In the broad Anti-fascist Front are fighting for liberty not only the Communists, Anarchists and Socialists, but also the Republican Parties and the Nationalist Basque

Party, which is a Catholic and Conservative Party, but which does not wish to see the people enslaved by Fascist absolutism, tortured by the unending hordes of Generals treacherous to the Republic and Spain.

The United Socialist Party of Catalonia, adhering to the Third International, has never hidden its objectives, its Socialist programme to create a State like the U.S.S.R.; but we are not accustomed to a policy of manoeuvres and deceit against our own allies who desire the defeat of Fascism, a policy which pleases so much the Trotskyist leaders of the P.O.U.M. . . ."

From the above it becomes hideously clear that the campaign of the Moscow Trial is to be extended to all countries. The attacks will by no means be confined to actual "Trotskyists." The above extract and the campaign now going on in Spain shows that the Stalinists are prepared to slander and vilify, and to use physical violence against, every revolutionary who disagrees with the present policy of the Communist International and the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R.

It is almost unbelievable that those who have devoted their whole lives to the cause of the revolution should be subjected to such vile attacks. The Spanish Revolution is menaced by such tactics. The Stalinists will not abandon their efforts to secure the suppression of the P.O.U.M.; they will intensify them, and unless the Anarchists and Syndicalists fall into line, then their turn will be next.

We take our stand with the P.O.U.M. in this situation: we call upon all who realise how vital it is to preserve the freedom of the workers' movement to discuss and to criticise, to decide its own policies, and to fight its battles openly and freely, to join in this protest against the threatening disruption of the Spanish workers' front against Fascism.

For an understanding of the political situation in Spain we recommend to our readers a new pamphlet from the Pioneer Publishers entitled *The Civil War in Spain*, by Felix Morrow. 9d. post free.

We also draw attention to the pamphlet from the Labour Publications Department entitled *The Witchcraft Trial in Moscow*, by F. Adler. 3d. post free. There is no need to emphasise that this pamphlet is written by a political opponent. Nonetheless, we recommend it to those requiring a non-"Trotskyist" exposure of the Moscow Trial.

Six pages again!

This number of "The Red Flag" has six pages. In these six pages is material no other Socialist or Communist paper has published and a point of view increasingly important to all militant workers.

The threat to the P.O.U.M. is a threat to the future of the Spanish and world revolution: with all its shortcomings the P.O.U.M. is the only party in Spain approximating to a Bolshevik policy. "The Red Flag" defends P.O.U.M. when even its closest allies in Britain remain silent for their own fractional advantage.

We cannot keep "The Red Flag" going without the help of our readers.

Those who value our paper will send donations at once to A. Boyd, 238 Edgware Road, London, W.2.

On the Peasant Question

By Leon Trotsky

I am often asked by some party comrades, what are the grounds for my special attitude relative to the peasant question, and wherein they differ from those of Comrade Lenin. Other comrades put the question in a more exact and concrete form: they ask if it be true, that I "underestimate" the role of the peasant in our economic development and hence do not accord to the economic and political alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry (Smyschka) the importance which it warrants. Such questions have been put to me orally as well as written. "Where have you got hold of all this?" I asked with great astonishment, "On what facts do you base your assertions?" The answer was mostly, "we do not possess any facts, it is a question of rumours which are circulating."

At first I did not trouble much about these rumours until a letter which I received recently impelled me to think over the matter and to consider the origin of the rumours. And quite by chance it came to me that already four or five years ago such rumours flourished richly in the Soviet soil. At that time they had a more simple form: "Lenin is for the peasants, Trotsky against them." I looked up the printed material on this question. In my article of 7th February, 1919, in the *Isvestia* as well as that of Comrade Lenin of 15th February in the *Pravda* these rumours were strongly repudiated as falsehoods.

The rumours, however, apparently still live. There is a French proverb: "If you slander long enough, something will stick in the end." At present it is no longer the landowners and capitalists who have recourse to such rumours. Their empire is long at an end. In their place, however, have appeared the "Nep" men in the town, the merchant and the rich farmer in the village. There can be no doubt that these circles have great interest in creating confusion and doubt as to the relation of the Communist Party to the peasantry. Is it just the rich farmer, the speculative buyer, the newly established merchant, the city middleman, who seek to set up connections on the market with the peasant as grain producer and buyer of industrial products and to exclude from this combination the authority of the Soviet State. It is just here that the decisive battle is now beginning to develop. Here also politics are serving economic interests. It is easy to see that when the private middleman wants to attach himself to the peasant and gain his confidence, he will gladly furbish up the old lies of the landowners and put them once more into circulation, of course with more caution than the landowner in his day, because since then the Soviet power has been strengthened.

A clear, simple and exhaustive description of the mutual dependence existing between the peasantry and the proletariat, or in other words, between the State industries and agriculture was given by Comrade Lenin in his well-known article: "Better little but good." The main idea of the article can be summarised as follows: During the coming years we must adapt the Soviet State in every possible way to the necessities, requirements and power of the peasantry, although we retain its character as a Workers' State; we

must adapt the Soviet industries, which we call State industries, on the one hand to the market demands of the peasantry, and on the other to the taxability of the peasantry. Only in this way shall we be able to maintain equilibrium in the Soviet State so long as the revolution does not disturb the equilibrium in the other capitalist countries. It is not the reiteration of the word "union" in every possible strain (although in itself it is a good word) but the practical adaptation of industry to the agricultural basis which can give us an effective solution of the central questions in our economy and politics.

Nearly all the "errors" and "sins" of Leon Trotsky have been traced back to his alleged "underestimation" of peasantry. Here is an article, written during Lenin's lifetime, dealing with this very point; an article approved by the Comintern Press at the time. The translation given below is from *International Press Correspondence* No. 1, Volume 4, dated January 4th, 1924.

This brings us to the problem of the "shears." (In Russia one understands by shears the strong disparity between the gold prices of agricultural and industrial products: this disproportion takes the form of a pair of shears in the graphical representation of the gold price. The expression was originated by Comrade Trotsky.—Ed.) The adaptation of industry to the peasant market presents us in the first place with the problem of the unconditional reduction of the cost price of industrial products. The cost price is not only dependent upon the method of manufacture in the factory concerned, but also upon the whole organisation of the State industry, the State transport system, State finance and the State commercial apparatus. When there is a disproportion between the various parts of our industries, it means that the State has at its disposal a large amount of dead capital, which burdens the whole industry and raises the price of every piece of calico and every packet of matches.

Under capitalism the natural, and in the end, only economic regulator is the crisis, that is to say, it is the only means of bringing the different branches of industry together and the total production of industry into harmony with the market demand. But in our Soviet economic organisation, which presents a transitional one between Capitalism and Socialism, industrial trade crisis can in no way be regarded as the normal or even the only means by which the single parts of the people's industry can be brought into harmony with one another. The crisis destroys or squanders a certain part of the State resources, and a part of this falls into the hands of the jobber, of the speculative buyer, that is to say, into the hands of private capital.

Since we received as a heritage from the past an extraordinary disintegrated industry, and moreover, one in which the various parts stood before the war in quite a different relationship with one another to that required to day, the regulation of the economic system,

the adaptation of the parts of the industry to one another—and also in such a way that the whole of industry can, by means of the market, be brought into harmony with agriculture—becomes one of the most difficult problems. Were we to decide to bring about the necessary reconstruction entirely with the help of so fearful a shake up as is provided by crisis, that would soon indicate that we had given a great impetus to private capital, which, in any case, is aiming at setting up a barrier between us and the villages. Private trading capital to day is securing enormous profits. But in addition it is restricting itself more

and more to agency operations. It is attempting to organise the small producers, or to lease industrial undertakings from the State. In other words: it is repeating the history of original accumulation—first in the sphere of trade and next in the sphere of industry. It is quite clear that every failure, every loss, which we suffer brings profit to private capital: first in that such losses weaken us, and secondly in that a large part of our losses unavoidably pass into the pockets of the new capitalism.

What then are the weapons which we can use under these circumstances in the struggle against private capital? Are there any such weapons at all? Yes, and these are the conscious, deliberate, systematic tackling of the market, and above all, the task of economic organisation. The most important productive agents, transport and credit, lie in the hands of the Soviet State. We do not need to wait until a universal or a local crisis reveals the disproportion between the various elements in our economic organisation. We need not become the blind plaything of economic forces, for the trump cards in the market game lie in our hands. We will—and we must learn to do so—observe with ever greater accuracy the fundamental elements of our economic system, the development of factors which are related to them, and on the strength of our calculations bring all sections of the industry into harmony. We shall learn to understand quantitatively as well as qualitatively, to adapt them to one another and also to establish the necessary relationship between industry and agriculture. Therein lies the real work in the union of the proletariat and the peasantry. He who maintains that everything lies in the union and not in the plan of production does not understand the essence of the thing, for the way to union leads through the accurate systematic, proportional development and guidance of the industries. There is no other way and there cannot be one. If our planned

economics commission (Gosplan) carries out its tasks in the correct manner, it will already be in a direct step towards the best and most successful solution of the peasant question—not through abolition of the market, but on the basis of the market. The peasant, up till now, does not understand this, but we must understand it, every Communist, every progressive worker must understand it. The peasant will realise sooner or later the effect of the activity of the economic Commission upon his economy. Naturally this problem is very difficult and extraordinarily complicated. We shall not solve it with a stroke of the pen. Its solution demands a continued system and exact and energetic measures.

Not less important, of course, is the advancement of agriculture. This process, however, manifests itself in a much more primitive form, and hence in one less dependent upon the influence of the State than the reconstruction of industry. The Soviet State must also support the peasant with agricultural credits (as far as our means will reach!) and help to make easier the placing of the products of agriculture (Corn, Meat, Butter, etc.) upon the world market. The way to the extension of agriculture leads, again, principally through industry—if not directly then indirectly. Agricultural machinery and tools, artificial manures, cheap domestic wares must be provided at prices within the reach of the peasant. The introduction and development of an agricultural credit system demand from the State the mobilisation of superfluous pecuniary resources. For this it is necessary that the State industries prove profitable, and this is impossible without the establishment of a correct proportion between their parts. In these lie the real, not demonstrative, but practical problems of the union between the working class and the peasantry.

In order to further this union politically, and to be able to meet the lying rumours whose breeding place is provided by the apparatus of private trade, we need an effective peasants' newspaper—such a newspaper as would really get into the hands of the peasant and which he would understand, and which would strengthen the relationship between him and the proletariat. A newspaper with a circulation of from 50 to 100,000 copies can and would only be a newspaper which perhaps spoke well-wishingly over the peasant, but it would in no way be a peasants' newspaper because it would not reach him but lie stranded on the way amongst our different authorities. We need for the peasant a weekly newspaper (for a daily paper we have not the necessary money nor the suitable means of distribution), which, in the first year, would have a circulation of two million copies. Such a newspaper would "teach" and in no sense "demand from" the peasant and describe what is taking place in the Soviet Union and abroad, with particular attention to that sphere of life with which the peasant comes into near and immediate contact. The new post-revolution peasant will soon acquire a liking for newspaper reading, if we only understand how to provide a suitable one. The circulation of the newspaper would

continued on page 6, column 4.

What Price Unity?—contd.

blockade against the Spanish Workers' Revolution, thus confirming the powerlessness of liberal democracy to fight effectively against national and international Fascism.

(b) It condemned the policy of the Soviet Government in associating itself with the lying policy of non-intervention, but welcomed the change in policy and hoped that this would mean the sending of arms and the giving of effective aid to the Spanish Workers, but that this aid would not be conditional on a change in the character of the class struggle in Spain, i.e., a change in favour of the defence of liberal democracy.

(c) It applauded not merely the fighting men of Spain, but also those who are actually putting into operation the principles of the Socialist Revolution, particularly in Catalonia and Valencia. It affirmed, with emphasis, that the struggle is not between democracy and Fascism, but between Socialism and Capitalism.

The foregoing decisions cannot be said to pass your acid test of "mobilising behind Soviet Russia in the course it is taking in Spain" but loyalty to "all the truth" demands that such principled criticism shall be maintained.

The need for the united front is real, Comrade Brockway. But the duty of revolutionary criticism is equally real. The two principles are not mutually exclusive but equally essential. We cannot deal with principled criticism, as Emperor Jones did with his Lord Jesus, "put it on the shelf for a bit."

THE UNITY AGREEMENT

It is reported that the leadership of the C.P.G.B., the I.L.P., and the Socialist League have prepared a unity scheme which will enable

them to capture the Labour Party, or to split the Party in a struggle over the expulsions of the Socialist League and the Labour "lefts." And that such expulsions will provide the basis for a united revolutionary party (your own contribution to the December Controversy "A New United Front" gives credibility to this suggestion).

Apart from the fact that secret negotiations between leaders without careful consultation with the "rank and file" throughout is completely undesirable as a wide basis for revolutionary unity, it is very clear that an approach to unity discussions with the Labour Party which renders a big split likely is about the worst possible road to a United Front of the Working Class Organizations.

In addition to these difficulties, there are other factors. The Edinburgh Conference presented two of them. One was the price the Communist Party was prepared to pay for affiliation. (Did you accept that C.I. line, Comrade?) Another the vote of the Divisional Parties themselves (not the T.U. block-vote!) against the Communist affiliation.

The line of the Edinburgh Conference was an answer to the interesting question asked by Arthur Horner in his pamphlet on the united front: the conference showed that even "after the events of the last twenty years, the existing basic political theory and practice of the Labour Party as developed by MacDonald, Snowden, and its other leaders . . . is viewed by the British Labour Movement as a possible way of obtaining Socialism, and even of preserving democracy and the working class movement from Fas-

cist reaction and from war."

And the importance of that fact for us is that it is with those who make such decisions—with whom, at present, we cannot secure unity on many fundamental issues—that we must secure a united front for certain limited objectives. And to create a struggle over expulsions is not the road to the United Front. If you doubt that, reconsider the lessons of the expulsions from the German political parties and trade unions.

WHAT PRICE UNITY?

Over several years, Comrade Brockway, you have stood for both the United Front and the Duty of Principled Criticism. This attack of yours on the 'Trotskyists' is not merely due to irritation connected with secession of 'Trotskyists' from the I.L.P.; it may presage a change in your attitude on the issue of principled criticism. Is not this change due to the limitations which the C.P.G.B.—S.L.—I.L.P. Unity Scheme imposes on you?

These arrangements that you have reached, we learn not from frank openly-conducted negotiations based on party discussions, but from hints and tendencies in the articles and speeches of 'leaders,' gossip in the three organizations, House of Commons talk, the labour correspondent in *The Times*, and even, at last, in the *Daily Herald*.

It forebodes ill for the duty of principled criticism that arrangements on such fundamental issues should be made secretly by the leaders and presented to the party memberships as an accomplished fact.

And it is on the issue of principled criticism that your difference with 'Trotskyists' is being reached.

Respecting the agreement you are making and on which you are pre-

paring to challenge the Labour Party for unity or split:—

On the issue of war, pacts, and armaments—remembering the differences on the issue of Abyssinia: are you ready for unity with the Socialist League and the C.P.G.B.?

On the question of the internal policy of the Soviet Union—remembering your attitude towards the 'Terrorist' trial and executions: are you ready to renounce your duty to struggle against such actions by the reigning group in Russia?

On the question of the Comintern and its line on the Spanish struggle (the issue on which you condemn the 'Trotskyists')—remembering that the C.I. foreign policy is based on the theory of Socialism in One Country: are you sure that you are right in condemning those who still maintain that principled criticism is a duty?

On the issue of the Spanish struggle being a fight for capitalist democracy and not for socialism versus capitalism—remembering the recently reached decisions of your own international grouping: are you ready to see lining up behind Soviet Russia's line in Spain as the supreme necessity of the moment?

In Britain and in Spain the United Front is essential: revolutionary socialist criticism is equally so. Even in the height of the struggle against Korniloff Lenin never taught the abandonment of criticism as a supreme necessity. The unity campaign of the I.L.P.—C.P.—S.L. will be a blow to the Workers' Movement in Britain if the destruction of an early prospect of the United Front of the Workers Organizations and the stifling of principled criticism proves to be the price we must pay for revolutionary unity.

Stewart Purkis.

The Novosibirsk Trial—contd.

come off." Has anyone ever seen a car going so slowly that it turned over? And mark "merely" turned over. The terrorist Arnold with it presumably! So he was taking chances with his own life? That is the starkest, stupidest thing about the whole of these alleged confessions in these Trials. Gangs of men who were so desperate that they were prepared to sacrifice themselves in the cause they wished to serve, yet over and over again they failed to pull off the job! Not once, but many times they were ready to immolate themselves but they always chose the wrong time, the wrong day, the wrong place, the victim moved, the car went too fast to be shot at, or the other car went too slow to do more than merely turn over! What a fool these Stalinist apologists must think the average person is.

Tragic though the end of Kirov was there are certain facts about that case which enable conclusions to be drawn which explain the event as an incident directly connected with the bureaucratic methods bound up with the present ruling caste of the Soviet State. It was an incident and nothing more. It had nothing about it which involved a terrorist centre—but everything to suggest that Kirov's assailant acted upon his own initiative. It is legitimate therefore, in view of the sweeping charges which the bureau-

cracy are making against revolutionists through the agents of the Soviet Courts, the public prosecutors, of these wholesale attempts at assassination, to point out that not least amazing is the complete lack of results. Of course the apologists immediately say: "What! are the Soviet leaders to be murdered before these terrorists are brought to trial?" As though anyone in their senses would suggest such a thing. But then of course they have got to make some answer, and they try to get away with more stupid arguments than that.

In spite, however, of their method of reply the question still remains. If the confessions are a mystery how much more of a mystery is it to explain why all these willing slayers missed missed and missed their victims. In frame-ups that is a very small matter. Novosibirsk Trial, like the Moscow Trial of 1936 was a frame-up. There were accidents, someone must be blamed, why not mix up the Trotskyists in it, put it on their shoulders, raise up more hate against them, make them responsible for the actual death of workers. Drag them out of jail, incriminate them somehow or other. Lay hands on the capitulators, threaten them, cajole them, put them on the spot. If other people of opposite opinions and maybe different nationality can also be incriminated then that will make the

affair more complicated, more difficult to unravel, it will confuse would be seekers after the facts. In fact the less material in the way of evidence we offer the better the campaign will work. Besides there are always our hirelings ready to make their apologies for our empty case, and that seems to be the "line."

Well, in spite of everything, Trotskyism will not be crushed in the Soviet Union. Some words from the pen of Trotsky are worth quoting, and mark well they were written in 1932 and not recently:—

"What conquers are principles. Capitulation can never be victorious. We shall do everything in our power so that the struggle for principles be led in consonance with and after consideration of the entire situation, both domestic and foreign. But it is impossible to foresee all the variations of development. Nevertheless, it is absurd and criminal to play hide and seek with revolution, to use trickery in dealing with classes and diplomacy with history. In such complex and responsible situations one must be guided by a rule so excellently expressed by the French in the proverb, *Fais ce que doit, advienne que pourra!* Perform your duty, let come what may! Zinoviev and Kamanev have fallen the victims because they did not keep to this rule."

Those words were true in 1932, with what irony history makes them still more true in 1936!

In the same article Trotsky speaks of Karl Radek and Piatakov. Today, Radek, who wrote in the Soviet press calling for the blood of the victims of the August trial awaits his own trial. G. L. Piatakov, who joined the Bolsheviks in 1910 must also be in a similar plight. "If one leaves aside the absolutely demoralised part of the capitulators of the type of Radek and Piatakov, who, as journalists or functionaries, will continue to serve every victorious faction (under the pretext of serving Socialism) then the capitulators taken as a political group, represent in themselves moderate intra-party 'liberals' who, at a given moment, rushed too far to the Left (or to the Right) and who subsequently took to the road of coming to terms with the ruling bureaucracy."

"But," says Trotsky, "the present day is characterised by the fact that this conciliation, which appeared so final, has begun to crack and to explode, and thereto in an extremely acute form."

Red Flag Fund

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Notes on the History of Bolshevism

[This is the concluding section of Harry Wick's examination of Ralph Fox's book, "Lenin." It continues the correction of Fox's account of the Civil War. So far Ralph Fox has refrained from making any attempt at reply—we wonder why?]

Yaroslavsky, a direct participant in the Military Commission of the 8th Congress, describes the dispute as follows:—

"For some time, especially during the early struggle, the partisan warfare was of much consequence in bringing about the defeat of the enemy. But some comrades (the minority in the Military Commission) insisted that the partisan warfare must become the rule in the Civil War . . . The special commission set up on the military question split into two parts, the Congress supported the majority which advocated a struggle both against the partisan methods and the attempts to weaken the discipline in the Red Army and minimise the importance of officers. Here, we essentially had a hang-over of Left Communism."

In reading this statement of Yaroslavsky's, one observes that he portrays a sharp division of opinion in mild tones. This is understood when reading the footnotes: "The author of these lines," he writes, "shared the erroneous views of the minority of the commission."

The 8th Congress, in its discussions left no room for doubt or ambiguity. The practical measures enumerated in the *Thesis on the Military Question*, deal with the contentious question as follows:—

"To continue to attract the war specialists to commanding and administrative duties, picking out the trusty elements, to place over them through commissars unremitting centralised party control, removing those proved to be good for nothing."

Equally decisive was the thesis against partisan warfare: it expressed no compromise with the military opposition, but its decisive defeat by the Congress.

One fact remains to be added. The thesis which was adopted at the 8th Congress—the Congress which Fox represents as that which castigated Trotsky's military leadership—was the thesis submitted to the Congress by Trotsky.

In the volumes published by the High Military Council, 1925: "How the Revolution Armed," there appears the following statement on Page 461, Vol. 2:—

"The 8th Congress took place in Moscow 23rd March, 1919. The thesis of Comrade Trotsky under the heading 'Our Policy in the task of creating the Army' is printed in Vol. 1, Pages 186 to 195. In view of the departure of Comrade Trotsky to the Eastern Front, the main report on the military question was given by Comrade Sokolnikov: after the co-report of Comrade Smirnov a long discussion took place in the special military commission of the Congress. After discussion, the Congress adopted the Thesis proposed by Comrade Trotsky."

Fox's picture of Trotsky as having neither love for the Communist Party nor faith in the power of its members to create an army, and, consequently, calling on the military specialists of the old regime, is thus shown to be entirely contrary to the authentic documents of the Bolshevik Party.

Some Conclusions.

"It is one thing to arrest and exile the Trotskyist cadres: it is another thing to put an end to Trotskyist ideology. That will be more difficult." *Stalin, Leninism*, Volume 2. Page 174.

Fox's *Lenin*, whilst claiming fidelity to history, is in reality dedicated to the difficult task indicated by Stalin. To destroy the unity which characterised the work of Lenin and Trotsky in the days of revolution is the object of the book. Lenin, reading the bourgeois and proletarian press of Western Europe, noted with pleasure that the workers in the West were using the names of Lenin and Trotsky as synonyms for Soviets and revolution. Fox has attempted the despicable task of making the name of Lenin's associate stand for Counter-Revolution. He has contemptuously failed.

To strike a blow at Trotsky in connection with the Finnish Revolution, Fox employs as authority, not Lenin, but the Mensheviks. To discredit the military work of Trotsky, he turns not to Lenin, but to the political position of the discredited "Left" Communist (the Bukharin Radek Yaroslavsky) group. What a contrast exists between what Fox writes to-day and what Communists wrote in Lenin's life-time.

continued at foot of column 2.

Spanish Machine Gunners demand Freeing of Mrs. Muhsam

The rumoured arrest and deportation of Mrs. Eric Muhsam, wife of the revolutionary murdered by German Fascist to which we drew attention in the September "Red Flag," is the subject of "An open letter to the Russian Workers." The letter is from the Eric Muhsam Machine Gun Group (Anarchists) and was published in the P.O.U.M. daily 'La Batalla,' on November 15th. 'La Batalla,' in an editorial comment, supports the Machine Gunners' demand, and, urges too, that the appeal of imprisoned Anarchists in the U.S.S.R., to be allowed to fight against Fascism in Spain, should be granted by the Soviet Government.

Our Group, in open war with fascism, views with frank admiration the attitude adopted by the Russian people. Throughout your vast country meetings have been organised to demonstrate your solidarity with us, your ships cross the seas and drop anchor in our anti-fascist ports of Spain, and even the children of your country wish us well and beseech us to sacrifice all we have for the cause of liberty. Never have we experienced such a moving example of international solidarity. Your hearts beat with ours and all your deeds and thoughts are directed towards helping us. But whilst in this our thoughts are united with yours; whilst we stretch forth our

hands to each other, giving thanks; at a time when we have drawn closer to each other than ever before; we think it opportune to tell you this.

Since the first days of the reactionary rising here we have been found fighting tirelessly against the fascists. Our Group went to the Aragon Front under the name of a comrade whom you knew well and whose death in a German concentration camp gave rise to world-wide indignation. On our banner we have woven the name of Eric Muhsam, and under this banner we fight in the common cause. This close bond of our hearts with the comrade murdered in Germany, a bond of which we give practical demonstration each day, also imposes upon us the duty of defending the woman who, during many difficult years, was the companion of Eric Muhsam.

Some of us know her as well as we knew him; we know how they lived, how unswervingly they held to the cause of the revolutionary workers. It is already many months, nearly half a year, since Zenel Muhsam was detained in your country, and all this time we have been unable to get in touch with her. All questions, all protests which we have sent to your Government, all the warnings we have sent to you yourselves fall on deaf ears. Frankly admiring the solidarity which you have shown to revolutionary Spain, we must confess that now more than ever we are deeply concerned about this matter. What is happening to Zenel Muhsam, companion of him to whom we have dedicated our banner? In the name of your Cause and ours, in the name of the world proletariat, we ask for the

liberation of Zenel Muhsam. She must be brought here to Spain.

Whilst the Spanish people are carrying on a life and death struggle against fascism, whilst the Russian people give us their support, Zenel Muhsam must not remain in prison or in Russian exile any longer. This matter cannot be hushed up; the cause of liberty is as closely linked to the name of Eric Muhsam as the Spanish and the Russian people. Because of this, we repeat, SET ZENZEL MUHSAM FREE!

May the next ship of yours which reaches Spain not come without her.

Group of Eric Muhsam Machine Gunners.

Huesca Sector, 3rd November, 1936.

On the Peasant Question continued from page 4.

grow from month to month and—be it in the next period only a weekly one—will secure contact between the Soviet State and many millions of peasants. But the newspaper leads us back to industry. Regard must be had to the technical demands. A peasant newspaper must be not only in editorial, but also in typographical respects, a model newspaper, as it would be a pity to place week by week in the peasants' hands a sample of our city slovenliness.

That is all I wish to say for the time being about the peasant question in reply to the questions put to me. If this answer does not satisfy the comrades who approached me in the matter, I am ready to elucidate it further, supported by exact material obtained from our six years' activity in Soviet enterprise, because this question is of the greatest possible importance.

A letter from the Provisional Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky

On the 28th of October the Norwegian Government announced an Order in Council which states that "a foreigner who is interned in accordance with the Provisional Order of 31/8/36 cannot, without the permission of the Department of Justice, appear as a Plaintiff before a Norwegian Court. Such permission shall be refused when the relations of the State with another State demand it."

This decision of the Norwegian Cabinet specifically deals with the case of Leon Trotsky, who instituted a libel action against the editors of the "Arbeideren," the organ of the Communist Party, and the "Fritt Volk," the organ of the Norwegian Fascists. This legal action of Leon Trotsky was decided on after the previous decision of the Norwegian Cabinet to intern him and to restrict his literary activities to purely historical works. Thus the combined pressure of the reactionary and Fascist forces in Norway and the diplomatic pressure of the Soviet Government has been brought to bear on the Norwegian Government in order to prevent him replying to the charges made against him at the Moscow Trial.

By yielding to this combined pressure the Norwegian Labour Government has reduced the democratic right of asylum to a trap. Such an action establishes a precedent which is a direct menace to the international working class.

The trials still pending in the Soviet Union and the unsatisfactory character of the evidence submitted in the Trial of August 19th-24th which led to the execution of the sixteen, demands immediate action by the Labour Movement for an authoritative enquiry into the whole affair. We, the undersigned, appeal to the organisations of Labour for their support for such an enquiry through an International Commission set up by the International Labour Movement.

In our opinion such a Commission of Enquiry should investigate the materials in the Commissariat of Justice in Moscow and also the material and statements of Leon Trotsky. We call on all those who support this proposal to inform the Committee of their support, in order that the campaign for the democratic right of asylum for Leon Trotsky may be launched and the charges made against him at the Moscow Trial may be fully investigated.

Signed: H. N. Brailsford; J. F. Horrabin; Reg Groves; Conrad Noel, Vicar of Thaxted; Stuart Purkiss; Fred Shaw; Rowland Hill; Irene Rathbone; Garry Allingham; Harry Wicks (Secretary).