

For the Fourth International

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Vol. 1

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No. 7

THE INTERNAL QUESTION

Analysis of the October Plenum

Resolution on the Internal Question

Party Structure

PROGRAMATIC DOCUMENTS

Organ of the
LEFT WING
Workers Party U.S.A.

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ON THE INTERNAL QUESTION

Against Bureaucratic Repression! In Defense Of The International News

I Democratic Centralism

The attack of the opportunists and bureaucrats in the Party, and their allies, on the Marxists, now centers on the publication by the Left Wing of the International News. Their thesis is that its publication is a gross and systematic violation of discipline and a provocation and splitting act. The second charge flows logically from the first. Discipline here is reduced to the question of the decisions of the PC forbidding its publication. No reasons are given for the prohibition other than the publication of the Party's Internal Bulletin, to which it is said we have access. We will examine this "reason" shortly.

There is involved, in this question, the entire problem of revolutionary discipline, democratic centralism and its relation to political lines and tendencies. Unlike the bureaucrats, who have plotted and are again plotting our expulsion, we approach the question of discipline from Lenin's promises. Discipline without Party democracy is a bureaucratic caricature of discipline. On the other hand, of course, Party democracy in Lenin's sense is meaningless, petty bourgeois and in reality meaningless without strict discipline. The two are obverse sides of the same medal. The function of Party democracy is to develop the creative, revolutionary abilities of the workers through their clarification and activity; the function of discipline is to ensure solidarity in action and centralized control.

Democratic centralism in both of its major aspects can be established and maintained only by a Marxist leadership which hammers out a Marxist line. These two elements are also obverse sides of one medal. One is impossible without the other. Marxists need democratic centralism in order to prevail over petty bourgeois and opportunist influences in the Party both in its ideological life and in action. A free ideological life and genuine revolutionary discipline always favor the Marxists against the opportunists. When the latter control the apparatus they are forced in defense of their line to interfere with the free play of the democratic centralist process by resorting to bureaucratic practices. These have two main aspects: throttling of democracy; establishment of harsh discipline for left elements, leniency for right elements. Thus at all times discipline has a political content.

II Democratic Centralism And The Publication Of Papers

Democratic centralism is a vital principle of Leninism. But Lenin himself never made a fetish of discipline. Under the regime he established he subordinated it to questions of political line and was extraordinarily flexible in its use. The historic attack on Zinoviev and Kamenev was motivated on political grounds. In 1918, a dispute raged in the Party over the question of the Brest-Litovsk peace. Trotsky reports that Bukharin, Radek and other ultra-lefts who were for revolutionary war against Germany, against Lenin's position, threatened for a year to split the Party.

Lenin won, and on March 3rd the peace was signed. The Seventh Party Congress was scheduled to convene on March 6th. On March 5th, Bukharin, Radek and Uritsky published a paper in Petrograd, THE COMMUNIST, which appeared daily until the 19th. In April, Bukharin, Ossinsky, Radek and Smirnov published a weekly which appeared until June, in Moscow. They attacked the line of Lenin, the Central Committee, the Party. The Party Congress met from March 6th to the 8th. It took no disciplinary action against these comrades. Neither did the Central Committee later. The Congress elected Bukharin to the Central Committee. Uritsky and Lomov were elected as alternates. Lenin fought the line of these comrades politically. When life itself demonstrated the absolute correctness of Lenin's course, Bukharin and the other liquidated their struggle.

Naturally, we do not support the fight these comrades made. We think they were incorrect. But we are not discussing the merits of the dispute. We are concerned here with the facts that an important political issue was in dispute, that it involved organizational consequences which threatened the unity of the Party, that Lenin and the Party put the political question above organizational questions and formal discipline and preserved the unity of the Party.

On the other hand, unity of the Party was subordinated by Lenin to political questions. In 1917, he threatened to split the Party if the social patriotic line of Stalin prevailed.

Another case of the correct relation of discipline to political line was the decision of the National Committee of the Communist League of America just before the fusion with the AWP to form the WP: "...we consider that while the press and the regular channels of the new Party would be available to all members for the expression of their standpoint, it would not be detrimental to the Party if any group of members desired to publish a periodical, which, while supporting the Party wholeheartedly, expressed in its columns a specific point of view not in conflict with the Party program. We stand in principle in favor of the Party ownership and control over all political periodicals published by any of its members. A truly revolutionary Party with a thorough-going Marxian program can take no other position. In this case, however, when the complete program of present-day Marxism - the permanent revolution in all its aspects and implications - has not yet been accepted by the Party although the latter's program is not in conflict with it, we feel that it is permissible for members to take the responsibility for a periodical whose central object is the propaganda of the fundamentals of this theory." (Third Convention Thesis adopted unanimously by the National Committee). By periodical in this thesis is meant a publicly sold paper or magazine. We are now engaged in realizing the idea enunciated in this thesis.

Another interesting example of the relation of discipline and political line was the dispute in the Greek section of the ICL. The majority were opposed to the "French turn", a minority for it. The minority published a newspaper defending the "turn" which they sold to the working class.

In contrast to this state of affairs, consider the course of those who support the new orientation of the ICL against those who oppose it. In the French section of the ICL, the liquidators seized VERITE illegally. In the German section they seized UNSER

WORT. In the Belgian section, they illegally suppressed the material of those opposed to the turn. Those who want to suppress the INTERNATIONAL NEWS are supporters of the orientation, and among them are defenders of the bureaucratic, anti-Leninist course of the ICL.

The question of the INTERNATIONAL NEWS is a question of political lines and bureaucratic repressions. The Left Wing is not attacking the Party platform, the Declaration of Principles. Why should it? We successfully fought for this Declaration of Principles in the CLA against the opportunism of Swabeck, Shachtman and Cannon. The Left Wing wants to concretize that platform in a Marxist sense through policy and action. It has tried to do it with all the means at its disposal and the channels offered by the Party. The bureaucratic regime which closed all doors to it and the increasingly opportunist line of the Party in practice or in failure to act made it necessary to publish the INTERNATIONAL NEWS. The INTERNATIONAL NEWS is an extension of the struggle for Marxism in the Party.

Against the Left Wing, the opportunists and their allies raise the question of discipline. What is the political content of their discipline? It is indicated already in the fact that they attack the voice of Marxism in the Party seeking to suppress it. That alone should be conclusive. But there are other facts which shed light on their conception of discipline and its political content. From the first days of the Party, Calverton, a Party member, used his publication, the MODERN MONTHLY, to attack the Party and its platform from the right. No action was taken against him. Budenz, a member of the Political Committee, used Calverton's magazine to attack the Party's platform from a reformist standpoint. No action was taken against him. Instead, the Party was systematically deceived as to his Stalinist line until it could no longer be concealed. Solon, a Party member, ran a publishing business and turned out pamphlets by Party enemies, which directly attacked the Party. No action has been taken against him. Ludwig Lore, a congenital reformist, a Party member, has continuously written opportunist and social-patriotic stuff in the capitalist, liberal and semi-radical press, and has used the Party platform to preach class peace. Charges have been made against him - three times. No action has been taken against him.

It is clear from these facts that those who want to suppress the INTERNATIONAL NEWS are using discipline as a cover to attack Marxism and protect Stalinist and other reformist tendencies.

111

The Roll Call of Stalinism

Let us consider the question of discipline a little further. Discipline has been invoked to noun comrades Watson and Williamson, Left Wingers, out of the party. Discipline was invoked to railroad Zack, another Left Winger, out of the Party. But Calverton, Budenz and Brier, Right Wingers, were allowed to live peacefully in the Party as long as they chose. And L. Lore is still in the Party and is protected by the leadership. Zack, Williamson and Watson, Left Wingers, have been driven out. On

the other hand, the demand of the Left Wing for the establishment of a probation period was voted down opening the doors wide to right wing and careerist elements.

Discipline has served the opportunists as a cover to avoid the solution of political problems on a political basis and to attempt their solution on an organizational basis. Thus, at the Pittsburgh Plenum in March, they refused to resolve the issues already in dispute in the Party (trade union, labor defense, Russian question, Socialist Party), and censured the Left for its political line! At the same time, Shachtman appealed in the Active Workers Conference only to the Right Wing elements to support the leadership. And Cannon incited comrades with nationalist prejudices to attack the Left, which was vainly trying to raise the question of the Italian-Ethiopian conflict and the Negro question in the United States to which it is vitally related! These questions were referred to the June Plenum, which did not consider them and were voted off the agenda of the October Plenum. Other important issues confronting the Party and the class have been disposed of in the same way.

At the same time, the attack on us has been waged unremittingly. In the early days of the Party our Party work was sabotaged by the National Office and the Political Committee, culminating later in the quiet elimination of the trade union, educational and language work departments, and the formal abolition of the Latin American department, in which the Left Wing predominated. That there was no other reason for these treacherous blows struck at the Party can be seen from the fact that on the Colonial Commission of six, established by the Political Committee on September 30th, there is not one Left Winger!

The policy of excluding the Left Wing from Party work and Party posts culminated first in the Cannon-Shachtman plot to expel it at the New York Plenum, which was proved by Muste and Shachtman's clumsiness, and secondly in the frame-up of the entire Left Wing at the New York district convention, for which purpose stool-pigeons were used. The failure of these sensational stunts did not induce these comrades to change their course. The new District Committee assigned posts only to the supporters of Cannon-Shachtman. The instructors for the fall of the International Workers School do not include any Left Wingers. This policy has been extended by the Cannonites into the Spartacus Youth League by their exclusion of a Left Wing comrade from the New York District Committee. The speakers at the Banquet to greet the Third Plenum did not include a Left Winger, and it was used as a tribunal to announce the forthcoming expulsion of the Left Wing. The stage has been set for a third expulsion-split drive at the Third Plenum through the arrangement of the agenda which excludes burning political issues and is designed to make the Plenum and possibly the pre-convention discussion revolve around the internal question.

Discipline has been invoked against us but no action was taken against Cannon, whose disloyalty to the Party was established at the June Plenum.

The campaign for discipline against us has been conducted in the name of fighting the splitters. But no action was taken against the followers of Cannon-Shachtman in Philadelphia, who split the South Philadelphia branch, constituted an illegal City

Committee and excluded the entire Left wing in Philadelphia. No action was taken against Cannon-Shachtman for their incitement of comrades in Philadelphia against us, which culminated in the burglary of the homes of two Left Wing comrades and the murderous assault on one of them by two Cannonites in a desperate attempt to prevent the publication of the INTERNATIONAL NEWS. The motion to hold them responsible was voted down. The gangsters were protected by suspending one for a year and the other for three months. And the leadership of this caucus openly fraternized with one of these gangsters after his suspension.

In the name of discipline, news of the international movement has been reduced to a minimum until the Party is starved for it. Vital information has been suppressed. The attempt to fulfill one of the elementary duties of a revolutionist, to get and give news of the international movement, is branded as a violation of discipline and must be done under the label of Party illegality.

All normal channels of reaching the Party have been cut off by the bureaucrats who control the apparatus. The press has been closed to us. In contradiction of the Declaration of Principles, Cannon-Shachtman have bootlegged their international line into the Party through the NEW MILITANT and NEW INTERNATIONAL. At the same time, they have excluded material opposed to that line which defends the Declaration of Principles and material on other subjects because it came from Left Wingers. New recruits to the Party are won on the basis of the line presented in the NEW MILITANT, making a mockery of all pretense of a democratic discussion until this condition is corrected.

The June Plenum failed to resolve the political and internal questions, voted for a democratically edited press and a democratic Party regime. But it refused to vote for organizational guarantees. After the Plenum, articles submitted by Left Wingers were rejected by the editors of the press and by the Political Committee.

The attempt of the Left Wing to campaign for an emergency SAVE THE PARTY CONVENTION, three months after the Plenum in legal Party channels, was sabotaged by the National Office which, contrary to a PC decision, did not print our appeal in the first Internal Bulletin and has not published it yet. At the same time the Left Wing was censured for distributing this appeal to its own members!

The repeated demand of the Left Wing for a roll call vote of the National Committee against various decisions of the PC has been voted down by the PC which was given this "right" by the Pittsburgh Plenum.

Already the pre-convention discussion has been "organized" to the factional advantage of the opportunists. The Pol Com has voted for tours after the Plenum for Shachtman and Muste and has voted down a proposal that Oehler make a tour!

One of the "big" arguments against the publication of the INTERNATIONAL NEWS is the Party's Internal Bulletin. Those, who argue on this basis, show a lack of understanding of the serious political issues involved. They reduce the entire question to a technical consideration. The Internal Bulletin is a poor substitute for the inalienable Party rights to speak thru the Party press and work in Party posts. The Internal Bulletin

in itself proves nothing. So long as the bureaucratic usurpation of the press continues and the bureaucrats ride unchecked over the rights of Party members, and pursue an increasingly opportunist course, the publication of an Internal Bulletin will constitute only a safety valve for the bureaucrats and a trap for weak people who put bureaucratic discipline above Marxism.

But let us take the argument on the basis of those who make it. What do we find? In almost four months three bulletins have been issued. A very large amount of material submitted by the Left Wing is waiting for publication while Cannon-Shachtman get out their material weekly in the NEW MILITANT. At present, they have the following Left Wing material: 2 short pieces, 1 fairly long, 3 very long (about 60,000 words), the protest of the Left Wing against the Cannon steamroller New York district convention.

They have refused to vote for the publication of the material contained in the Internal Bulletin of the French Bolshevik-Leninists, which exposes their failure and bankruptcy. They refused to vote for the publication of Trotsky's August 13th letter to the WP appealing to us to "become re-integrated into our international organization" and the postscript of a recent letter from Trotsky in which he says his criticism of us was too severe.

They have factionally abused their editorship of the Bulletin by suppressing Zack's appeal for reinstatement, which he made to the June Plenum - a Plenum document; a resolution on labor defense policy submitted to the June Plenum by a number of comrades, mostly Left Wingers - another Plenum document; our appeal for an emergency convention; Oehler's reply to Cruz's June 10th letter; the Cruz (Feb. 18th)-Oehler-Adolphe-Oehler polemic on organic unity. They published Mendelsohn's statement against the Left Wing in Bulletin #3 despite the fact that our material was waiting. This, and the refusal to vote for publication of the Internal Bulletin of the Bolshevik-Leninists, reveals how factional and dishonest their attitude is and why they want us to discontinue INTERNATIONAL NEWS and place our Marxist line at their mercy.

IV What Is The Solution?

In the name of discipline the Left Wing has been reduced to the status of fourth class citizens. That has been accomplished in the name of discipline which is a cloak behind which marches opportunism. What is the solution?

- 1...Put the burning disputes on the agenda.
- 2...Adopt a Marxist position on them.
- 3...Democratize the Party by:
 - a...Open a free pre-convention discussion in the Party press
 - b...Open the Party press to the Left Wing
 - c...Organize staffs on the NEW MILITANT and NEW INTERNATIONAL with Left Wing representation.
 - d...Re-organize the New York district committee, giving all tendencies representation commensurate with their strength and assign posts to all tendencies.
 - e...Re-organize the IWS giving the Left Wing classes.
 - f...Organize a national tour of the Party branches for the Left Wing.
 - g...Create an editorial staff for the Internal Bulletin including the Left Wing.

INTERNAL QUESTION - 7-

- h..Publication of the Bulletin twice a week.
- i..Recognition of the right of Party members to publish a periodical which supports the Party's platform but discusses the complete program of present day Marxism - the Permanent Revolution in all its aspects and implications.
- j..Open a campaign against Stalinist and reformist influences in the Party.
- k..Purge the Party of social patriotic elements.
- l..Expel Goodman and Brooks and issue a statement in the press against gangsterism.
- m..The several month old split in Philadelphia - initiated and carried out by the Cannonites must be resolved on the basis of the proposal by the South Philadelphia branch and unity restored.
- n..Re-establish the Party apparatus (trade union, colonial, language, educational).
- o..Create a National Negro department.
- p..Reinstate the expelled Left Wingers.
- q..To constitute the PC as a trial committee and bring Ludwig Lore up on charges.
- r..To publish in the next issue of the NEW MILITANT the minority WAR thesis on the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

T H E L E F T W I N G .

MOTION ON THE BASIC UNIT OF THE PARTY:

The foundation convention of the Workers Party adopted the territorial branch as the basic unit of the Party, and a few months later the Political Committee adopted a motion on Language Branches, which was a step backward and opened the door for the organization and spreading of Language Branches and Language Federations, not in name but in fact.

The Third Plenum of the Party proposes to the membership for discussion and for the Convention for adoption the amendment of the Constitution:

A - Shop Unit basis.

To establish the Shop Nuclei form of organization as the basic unit of the Party. To use the territorial branch as the transitional form and to strive toward the transformation of the Party to the Shop Unit basis. No Party can seriously be considered a revolutionary Marxian Party with mass influence unless it has strong nuclei in shops, mines, mills and factories.

B - Against Language Branches.

C - For a Probationary Period.

MOTIONS FOR PLENUM - 1955.

LANGUAGE BRANCHES - Three or more comrades speaking the same language shall constitute a language fraction to carry on activity among the foreign-born workers. No language branches shall be established. Transitional branches of comrades not speaking the English language can be organized (1) where no regular branch of the Party exists; (2) and until either a regular branch is constituted or a sufficient number join the transition branch who speak the English language, thereby enabling the transition branch to be integrated into the party structure. It shall be compulsory for such transitional branches to conduct a class in Workers' English.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD - A probationary period of three months for all new members shall be established (starting April 1st). Such members must be active, function as regular members, and pay dues, with voice but no vote. At the end of three months, the final vote on the applicant is taken by the Branch. The Branch can make exceptions above but not below this three month period.

(These motions were not considered by the plenum.)

CENTRIST VICTORY AT THE THIRD PLENUM!
Marxists "Expelled" !

In contrast to our proposals for a satisfactory solution of the internal situation was the proposal of the Cannon-Weber-Muste bloc. Our proposals, had they been adopted, would have given us equal rights in the Party with the other factions. We do not ask for the special rights the Cannon-Weber forces enjoyed up to the October Plenum by usurping the press, with the consent of the PC, by presenting voluminous material in support of the new orientation of the ICL, and by excluding in toto material from the Left Wing opposing the new orientation. This was the procedure for nine months when the Party had NO POSITION on this question. Likewise, they did the same thing with their SP orientation, the Russian Question and numerous other questions confronting the Party.

The resolution of the majority whitewashes their own conduct for the past nine months and makes a bitter condemnation of the Left, accusing us of breaking discipline which they flouted continuously. The majority bloc refused to take even one step to restore us to citizenship in the Party. But they took steps to place the Left Wing in a tighter straitjacket than before. And this took place at a Plenum which initiated the pre-Convention period and discussion!

In reality the majority bloc **EXPELLED THE LEFT WING**, leaving it in the Party in name, in order to chop it to pieces individually. The Plenum allows Shachtman, for the Cannon faction, and Muste, for the Muste faction, to make national tours in the pre-Convention discussion period, but prohibits the Left Wing from sending out a speaker. The Plenum allows the majority to print its resolutions in the **NEW MILITANT**, but refuses this right to the minority and confines the minority to the internal bulletins that are to appear in the pre-Convention discussion period. To allow a centrist position the avenues to the Party and the class during a pre-Convention discussion period, and to bottle up the Left Wing to a couple of internal bulletins, is a condition no Marxist can accept.

In rejecting our solution of the internal situation, the unprincipled Cannon-Weber-Muste bloc has substituted a procedure that insures a victory of the centrists and opportunists over the Marxists by bureaucratic methods. Their clever method of expelling the Left Wing at the Plenum that begins the pre-Convention discussion, enables them to eliminate in advance any serious opposition to their line at the Convention. The Left Wing comrades can save themselves from expulsion only by putting tape over their mouths, by tying their hands and by accepting the centrist

resolutions adopted on War, The Road To the Fourth International, the SP and Unemployed questions. It is demanded of us that we must accept the Plenum resolutions at the same time that the Plenum is supposed to open up the pre-Convention discussion and allow the minority to present its position.

If we were to submit to the bureaucratic Plenum decisions, it would mean political and organizational capitulation in the pre-Convention discussion period. With the refusal to grant any of our just demands, and with the instruction to the PC to act against us, only one course was left open to us. We stated at the Plenum that we refuse to submit to these bureaucratic measures, that if we do not have equal rights during the pre-Convention discussion period, we will continue to reach the Party and the class through the publication of our INTERNATIONAL NEWS, that we will appeal to the membership over the heads of the leadership against its centrist War position, on its SP orientation, on its revisionist position of Marxism, on the question of the Road To the Fourth International. When bureaucrats and opportunists, who control the Party apparatus, confront us with the necessity of making a choice between loyalty to their bureaucratic decisions and loyalty to Marxism and the working class, we will always choose the latter.

The Workers Party, under the present leadership, is doomed. The Third Plenum took giant strides to the right of the Declaration of Principles. All three Plenums moved the Party to the right of the Declaration of Principles. Today, in contrast to the position adopted at the Fusion Convention, the Party has a centrist position on the burning issues of the day. Unless the membership repudiates the Third Plenum and its centrist line; unless the membership repudiates the expulsion resolution adopted by the Cannon-Weber-Muste unprincipled bloc; unless the membership acts at once - because the Convention arrangements insures, in advance, the victory of this unprincipled bloc over Marxism - the Party's fate as a Marxian organization will be sealed. The Plenum decision on the Convention arrangements must be repudiated by the membership at once.

The basis for democratic discussion in the period preceding the Convention must be based upon the following:

- (1) Reject the Cannon-Muste-Weber resolution on the internal question and their Convention arrangements.
- (2) Adopt the proposals of the Left Wing.
- (3) Instead of electing delegates on the basis of

one to ten members, they should be elected on the basis of one to five.

- (4) Instead of New York, Chicago must be the Convention city.
- (5) Instead of allowing only the majority Plenum resolutions to appear in the NEW MILITANT, the minority resolutions and discussion articles by the Party membership must also be printed in the Party press. All resolutions, except those on the internal question, should be printed in the NEW MILITANT. Those should be printed in the Internal Bulletin.
- (6) Instead of allowing only Shachtman and Muste to make national tours, the Left wing must also be allowed to make a national tour.

WE APPEAL TO THE MEMBERSHIP TO REJECT AND PROTEST THE DECISIONS OF THE THIRD PLENUM; TO DEMAND A DEMOCRATICALLY ORGANIZED CONVENTION AND PRE-CONVENTION DISCUSSION.

ON THE INTERNAL QUESTION

Against Bureaucratic Repression In Defense Of The International News

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