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LEON TROTSKY'S LAST LETTERS

ON CONSCRIPTION

Dear Comrade Al,

I believe that we agree with you on all the points of a principled character as they are formulated in your letter of July 6.

It is very important to understand that the war does not nullify or diminish the importance of our Transitional Programme. Just the contrary is true. The Transitional Programme is a bridge between the present situation and the proletarian revolution. War is a continuation of politics by other means. The characteristic of war is that it accelerates the development. It signifies that our transitional revolutionary slogans will become more and more actual, effective, important with every new month of the war. We have only of course to concretize and adapt them to the conditions. That is why in your first paragraph I would eliminate the word "to modify" because it can produce the impression that we must modify something of a principled character.

We are absolutely in favour of compulsory military training and in the same way for conscription. Conscription? Yes. By the bourgeois state? No. We cannot entrust this work as any other, to the state of the exploiters. In our propaganda and agitation we must very strongly differentiate these two questions. That is, not to fight against the necessity of the workers being good soldiers and of building up an army based on discipline, science, strong bodies and so on, including conscription, but against the capitalist State which abuses the army for

the advantage of the exploiting class. In your paragraph four you say: "Once conscription is made into law, we cease to struggle against it but continue our struggle for military training under workers' control, etc." I would prefer to say: "Once conscription is made into law we, without ceasing to struggle against the capitalist State, concentrate our struggle for military training and so on."

We can't oppose compulsory military training by the bourgeois State just as we can't oppose compulsory education by the bourgeois State. Military training in our eyes is a part of education. We must struggle against the bourgeois State; its abuses in this field as in others.

We must, of course, fight against the war not only "until the very last moment" but during the war itself when it begins. We must, however, give to our fight against the war its fully revolutionary sense, opposing and pitilessly denouncing Pacifism. The very simple and very great idea of our fight against the war is: we are against the war but we will have the war if we are incapable of overthrowing the capitalists.

I don't see any reason why we should renounce the slogan of a people's referendum on the war. It is a very good slogan to unmask the futility of their democracy in such a vital question as the war.

I don't believe that the demand for workers' defence guards will be eliminated by the demand for universal military training. The approach of the war and the war itself with the rise of

chauvinistic moods will inevitably provoke pogroms against the trade unions, revolutionary organisations and papers. We can't give up defending ourselves. Universal training can only facilitate for us the creation of workers' defence guards.

"Government ownership... of all war industries" should be replaced by "National" or by "State ownership."

Such are the remarks I can make in relation to your letter.

Fraternally,
L. TROTSKY.

July 9, 1940.

HOW TO REALLY DEFEND DEMOCRACY

(The theme of the following letter is the same as that of the article upon which Trotsky was working when he was assassinated).

Dear Friends,

We should, in my opinion, fortify and deepen our campaign against the Pacifist tendencies, prejudices and falsehoods.

The Liberals and Democrats say: "We must help the democracies by all means except direct military intervention in Europe." Why this stupid and hypocritical limitation? If democracy is to be defended, we should defend it also on European soil; the more so as this is the best way to defend democracy in America. To help England—to crush Hitler—by all means including military intervention, would signify the best way to defend "American democracy." The purely geographical limitation has neither political nor military sense.

That which we workers find worth defending, we are ready to defend by military means—in Europe as well as in the United States. It is the only possibility we have of assuring the defence of civil liberties and other good things in America.

But we categorically refuse to defend civil liberties and democracy in the French manner; the workers and farmers to give their flesh and blood while the capitalists concentrate in their hands the command. The Petain experiment should now form the centre of our war propaganda. It is important, of course, to explain to the advanced workers that the genuine fight against Fascism is the Socialist revolution. But it is more urgent, more imperative, to explain to the millions of American workers that the defence of their "democracy" cannot be delivered over to an American Marshal Petain—and there are many candidates for such a role.

Carl O'Shea's article in the Socialist Appeal of August 10 is very good. We can, in this manner, develop a very effective campaign against William Green as well as against John L. Lewis, who flatly reject conscription in favour of a voluntary slave army.

The Institute of Public Opinion established that over 70 per cent. of the workers are in

favour of conscription. It is a fact of tremendous importance! Workers take every question seriously. If the Fatherland should be defended, then the defence cannot be abandoned to the arbitrary will of individuals. It should be a common attitude. This realistic conception shows how right we were in rejecting beforehand purely negative Pacifist or semi-Pacifist attitudes. We place ourselves on the same ground as the 70 per cent. of the workers; against Green and Lewis, and on this premise we begin to develop a campaign in order to oppose the workers to their exploiters in the military field. You, workers, wish to defend and improve democracy. We, of the Fourth International, wish to go further. However, we are ready to defend democracy with you, only on condition that it should be a real defence, and not a betrayal in the Petain manner.

On this road I am sure we can make some progress.

Fraternally,
L. TROTSKY.

August 13, 1940.

ANOTHER THOUGHT ON CONSCRIPTION

Dear Chris.

Thank you very much for the Tanaka material. It has arrived in plenty of time, because for the past two and a half months I have been busy almost exclusively with the investigation of the assault.

I very much enjoyed your appreciation of the anti-Pacifist position accepted by the Party. There are two great advantages to this position: first, it is revolutionary in its essence and based upon the whole character of our epoch, when all questions will be decided not only by arms of critics, but by critiques of arms; second, it is completely free of sectarianism. We do not oppose to events and to the feelings of the masses an abstract affirmation of our sanctity.

The poor "Labour Action" of August 12 writes: "In his fight against conscription we are with Lewis 100 per cent. We are not with Lewis for even a single per cent., because Lewis tries to defend the capitalist Fatherland with completely outdated means. The great majority of the workers understand or feel that these means (professional voluntary armament) are outdated from a military point of view and extremely dangerous from a class point of view. That is why the workers are for conscription. It is a very confused and contradictory form of adhering to the "arming of the proletariat. We do not flatly reject this great historical change, as do the sectarians of all kinds. We say "Conscription? Yes. But made by ourselves." It is an excellent point of departure.

With best greetings, I am,

Fraternally,
(Signed) YOUR OLD MAN.
August 17, 1940.

AMERICA'S GROWING DOMINATION

The Greek war, with the terrific reverses suffered by the Italians, has focussed attention on the Mediterranean as a new front in the world conflict. It has demonstrated the weakness of Italian Imperialism, with an industry as an economic base far weaker than that of France. This, coupled with the incompetence of the Italian general staff, has led to the defeats in Greece and Albania.

Italian Imperialism was driven by the explosive nature of the contradictions within Italian society, to break away from dependence on Great Britain. In an effort to form an independent Empire, secure for the undisputed exploitation of the Italian capitalists, reflected in Mussolini's dream of a regenerated Imperial Rome, Italian capitalism has attempted to find a solution to its problem only to reveal its inner decay.

Italy, which entered as the "ally" of the brother totalitarian state, in order to claim her "place in the sun," has been thrust into ignominious dependence on the mightier structure of Nazi Germany. Breaking away from the weakened power of Britain, she has not gained an "independent" status, but has merely changed masters. In everything but name she has become a vassal state of the Reich for the present. As a writer in the *Times* put it: "Nations in the past have fought their way from dependence to independence: Italy to-day is fighting to end her independence in order to become a dependency of Germany." Not quite accurate, for previously Italy enjoyed not an independent position, but that of satellite of the "ruler of the seas." Nevertheless, it expresses in a graphic way the dilemma of the Italian bourgeoisie. Defeat means destruction; victory means dependence.

In the invective and abuse which are being showered on Italian Fascism, particular stress is laid on Mussolini personally. The *Times* produces a calendar of Mussolini's perfidy, emphasising the "stab in the back" nature of his turn against this country.

While the British bourgeoisie are stressing the complete dependence of Italy on Germany and are attempting to give the Italian bourgeoisie some "disinterested" advice on the policy best suited to their interests, the Italian and German Imperialists are answering in like coin. They remonstrate with the British for falling into the clutches of the Wall Street octopus.

It is indisputable that every month of the war increases the dependence of Britain on the Imperialists of the U.S.A. economically, financially and finally militarily. The mission of Lord Lothian to procure more aid from America, once

the British funds and investments are used up, is an illustration of this fact. Britain's every shilling and penny of investments on the American continent is to be squeezed out for the start, as President Roosevelt genially indicated in advance of the return of Lothian in order that there should be no doubt on the question. Then, he hinted the question of loans in exchange for, not merely the use of the bases, but the actual possession of the West Indies, could come up for discussion.

The war is becoming more and more a conflict between the two strongest Imperialist states—America and Germany—for world domination, with the other powers merely ranging themselves on one side or the other as satellites and favoured vassals. Before coming to real grips with its formidable adversary, American Imperialism intends to weaken and dissipate the strength of its "noble ally."

The British bourgeoisie, stripped of their former glory, no matter what they say publicly, have to cringe at the table of their more fortunate "blood relatives" while humbly begging aid. This will be given, of course, at a price. Not only in economic and strategic positions, but in blood. The recent announcement of the impending call-up of 1,500,000 men in Britain, and a projected extension of the minimum age for reserved occupations to thirty has been carried out at the instance of the Wall Street master. All of Britain's resources must be put at stake while America is yet preparing for a decisive intervention which would leave her alone as mistress of the globe.

Britain, alas, has no other course, as the speeches of Churchill and others show, but to accept this as their inexorable fate. The German nation is the enemy, they tell us, not distinguishing between Hitler and the German people. But the blame for Italy's part in the war is loaded on to the shoulders of Mussolini himself and not the "unfortunate" Italian nation. But great care is being taken that a distinction is made between Mussolini and the Court and certain high Fascist dignitaries. For, perhaps later, they calculate, a compromise with Italian Imperialism can be arrived at. How much sincerity their denunciations of Italian Fascism really possess is clear: they would be only too willing to save blood-stained Italian Fascism if they could, with the sacrifice of its mere figurehead, if this could be reconciled with their Imperialist interests.

This position is underlined by the diplomatic policy pursued in regard to Petain and Franco. The annexation of Tangier by Spain was meekly accepted with the usual note of protest. When

Mussolini was playing the game of "neutrality" the British Imperialists heaped fulsome praise on him; of the butcher Franco the *Times* of November 1st says: "General Franco is above all a man of character . . . the doctrine of Nazism is the spiritual antithesis to that for which General Franco stands . . . under General Franco's wise leadership reconstruction has already made giant strides . . ."

By these placatory gestures, plus the substantial supplies which the British blockade allows to enter Spain, they hope to win over this "Christian gentleman" to their side. If it does nothing else it at least makes a mockery of the claim that it is democracy versus all the evil features of dictatorship which is the issue.

On Petain, too, despite the blows which he has dealt Britain as an agent of Germany, they place their hopes that the French bourgeoisie will execute a new about turn in their favour. Up to now General de Gaulle alone of all the foreign "allied" representatives on British soil, is not the recognised representative of the Government of his country, even though, in one sense, he has a better claim than others, since French Equatorial Africa flies the flag of "Free France." British Imperialism is holding the adventurer, De Gaulle, in reserve as a means of exerting pressure on the men of Vichy and in case they can find no possibility of compromise with them.

This, despite the disgusting subservience and the craven way in which this unscrupulous gang handed France over to Hitler and attempted to introduce an imitation of his leprous regime. So much for the flag of freedom which Britain holds aloft. Incidentally, General Metaxas, the new hero for the struggle for freedom, has learned quite a few points from his butcher conferees in the dictator countries, despite the fact that because of economic and strategic considerations, he finds himself opposed to them to-day.

But all will be in vain. When Franco, no less than Mussolini, is compelled to enter the war on the side of the Axis, we can imagine the shriek of rage and the exposing of the barbarous nature of Franco's regime by the "democrats"—especially by the Labour leaders in the Cabinet. France has no other choice but to attempt to seize what plunder he can out of the struggle of the Titans. Hitler will place before him the alternative of "collaboration" and the assisting of German troops in the taking of Gibraltar and Portugal—or the forcible occupation of Spain itself. Hitler would have no choice but to face his friend with this painful necessity. As to Petain, so to Franco, he poses the old classical argument—if they do not hang together, and he is beaten, the masses will hang them all separately. Powerful cement indeed!

The destruction of Britain would have solved most of the problems with which Hitler is at present faced and would have left him free to

fight the real antagonist, the U.S.A. That is why even now invasion is not excluded and will probably be attempted this winter or spring, although the scales are now weighed against the success of such a venture.

Hitler is master of all Europe, but this continent is too small for the needs of German Imperialism. The war cannot stop in its present phase of stalemate. The bombings to which the industrial cities, ports and shipping of Britain are being subjected, horrible and destructive though they may be, cannot by themselves win the war. A desolated and ruined Britain only becomes even more dependent on her stronger ally across the ocean.

Dynamic German Imperialism thinks in terms of continents, not countries. Germany is preparing, as Smuts and De Gaulle have hinted, to advance towards the conquest of Northern and Western Africa and the Middle East. The fall of Gibraltar would provide a bridgehead into Africa on the one side, while through Greece (and the Germans will certainly intervene at a later stage through Yugoslavia or Bulgaria, depending on the agreements with Russia) they would hope to get a bridgehead into Syria and so to the oil of the Middle East, and toward Egypt and the Suez Canal. That is the meaning of the involvement of Greece. The battle of the Mediterranean will lead to the battles of Africa and Asia. Astonishing new successes await the German Army in the next period at least. The emphasis on the campaign of 1942-3-4 by Churchill indicate a realisation that the disparity of arms equipment between Britain and Germany impels Britain to remain on the defensive next year. Germany's military preponderance and the crushing of all organised military opposition remains for the time being unchallenged on the continent.

Hitler is relentlessly driven on to conquests wider and wider afield; he must entrench himself before the superior potentiality of America becomes an actual, tangible fact. Germany wishes to render herself as strong as possible. Among other things the alliance with Japan is used and will be used to distract a great part of American preparations along the Pacific Coast and away from the Atlantic. But this will not deter the Oceanic Colossus. America is resigned to the inevitability of fighting Japan and Germany at once. These are the countries which America cannot appease. She has no alternative but to struggle to the death. Colonel Knox's statement that Britain's fight is "an irreconcilable conflict which must be fought to the finish," in reality is a reflection of the position of America also. She cannot remain only a source of supply, but will have to take up arms against both her rivals simultaneously.

The war is extending over whole continents. The havoc wrought in Germany and Britain is as nothing compared to that which will be

wrought in the countries of Africa and Asia which will echo to the invaders' and the "defenders" tread. The tropical night will be alight with the glow of parachute flares and incendiary bombs. The sound of air raid sirens will extend over every continent—the universal shriek, symbolising Imperialism's world domination and death agony. The prolongation and endless extension of the war in time and space can only be stopped by the proletarians of all lands extending the hand of comradeship to one

another and taking their fate into their own hands. Neither the "New Order" of Hitler and Mussolini, nor the "Old Order" of Churchill and Roosevelt can solve the problems of mankind, but only the Socialist reorganisation of the productive forces and the destruction of the outworn barriers of the National State.

The Socialist United States of Europe, the Socialist world—that is the only way to end war and establish peace.

THE "PEOPLE'S" CONVENTION

THE SIX POINT PROGRAMME

The agitation for the People's Convention on the part of the Communist Party is reaching its climax in preparation for the National Convention in January, 1941. A six point programme has been issued round which the Convention is to revolve. Wherever the Communist Party has any influence it is energetically propagating this programme. In order to understand where it is that Stalinism, with its new twists and turns, is attempting to lead the working-class, let us examine the formal programme itself.

Points 1, 2 and 3 call for "Defence of the people's living standards," "Defence of the people's democratic and trade union rights," and "Adequate air-raid precautions, deep bomb-proof shelters, rehousing and relief of victims." How these laudable objects are to be achieved is not explained at all. The necessity for stern and bitter class struggles through the trade union and factory committees, as the indispensable and only means of fighting back against the attacks of the employers, is not indicated at all. The necessity to link up the needs of the small farmers, shop keepers and middle class generally with the struggle of the working-class, through committees of their representatives, linked with consumers' and factory committees, is not even understood.

These three points are merely bait to fool those sections of the working-class who are disillusioned with the war and its consequences. The appeal around these demands is intended to draw them round the rest of the programme of the Communist Party.

Point 4 calls for "Friendship with the Soviet Union." Presumably on the lines of the Franco-Soviet Pact of the good old days of the Popular Front, or on the lines of the German-Soviet agreement. Instead of explaining that there can never be genuine "friendship" between the Soviet Union and any capitalist state, and that the only "friend" which the Soviet Union possesses is the revolutionary working-class, this meaningless phrase is thrust forward. Moreover, "friendship," the word chosen, is in itself an indication of the ideology of those who put it forward. For the defence of the conquests of the October Revolution, and "friendship" with the Soviet bureaucracy (which is what they mean) are two

entirely different things. The Kremlin and its agency, the Communist Party, through whom it acts in the working-class movement, conceive that movement as a pawn to be used in the interests of Soviet diplomacy. For the Communist Party this is the key to the whole sham which it is busily erecting. Any influence it might gain would be a bartering counter in the deals between Stalin and British Imperialism or its rivals. Yes! For the defence of the Soviet Union against Imperialism, but not by the abandonment of the independent proletarian policy in the Imperialist states. That is how the problem must be posed by advanced workers.

Point 5 says "A people's government truly representative of the whole people able to inspire the confidence of the working people of the world." In agitating for this Convention, in speeches and in articles, the Communist Party and those elements close to it, sometimes interpret their policy as a call for a "Socialist" Government, sometimes a "People's" Government in accordance with the class nature of the audience. Nowhere, and in no way is its nature and class constitution analysed. Very conveniently for these skilful deceivers of the masses, the "People's" Government will mean different things at different times for different purposes.

Point 6 concludes with the grandiose scheme for "A people's peace that gets rid of the causes of war." Very nice and very vague and ambiguous. Occasionally, nowadays the Communist Party leaders let slip their "rediscovery" of the teachings of Lenin: that war is caused by the clashes between the rival Imperialisms for markets, colonies and raw materials, and that only the overthrow of the capitalist system can bring peace. That this overthrow can only take place through civil war and the seizure of power by the workers, is very rarely and casually hinted at, but no consistent and "patient explanation" of the elementary axioms of Leninism is given to the workers. That is the road they do not wish for and cannot travel.

WHO SUPPORTS THE PEOPLE'S CONVENTION ?

Insofar as this Conference has any real backing, it is composed of supporters and sympathisers of the Communist Party who sincerely

believe that it is a step on the road to workers' power, and some militants disgusted with the Labour leaders, who are seeking an alternative leadership. Unfortunately, although the mass influence of Stalinism is negligible, they maintain a hold upon a section of the leading militants in the factories and the trade unions who will be represented at this Conference. It is for them that the occasional references to Socialism are made by the Communist Party leaders. Precisely because of this, the movement represents a real danger to the working-class.

Pritt & Company, G.P.U. agents in all but name, who actually are the nominal sponsors of the movement played no great part in setting it in motion. Without the powerful apparatus of the Communist Party, the so-called "People's movement" would not exist. The mechanics of "the spontaneity with which this movement has sprung up" (Pritt, *Labour Monthly*, October, 1940), is crystal clear. It is the local organisations of the Communist Party with their fraction workers in the mass organisations of the Labour movement, that has given the semblance of a following to this Convention. Without it, and with it too, in the long run, the whole elaborate procedure would collapse without arousing a ripple among the broad masses. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Communist Party refrain from measuring their support among the "people" by putting up candidates in the by-elections. Thus is revealed clearly the nature of the Communist Party's attempt to deceive their militants by utilising as the excuse for their ambiguous and impotent programme, the support of the broad strata of the "people."

Revolutionary workers are being lulled by speeches such as that of Pritt to the militant workers of South Wales: "The only chance for humanity is that this Government be replaced quickly by a government of the working-class." (*Daily Worker*, October 7). When this is used as part of the propaganda for a "People's Government" it must be exposed as sheer demagoguery leading the working-class on the road to disaster. The danger is that a large section of the leftward moving workers groping for the revolutionary alternative to that of the Labour Party will be swung off their course and led into mere adventures or a new support for some more pernicious version of the "Popular Front," some new coalition with the capitalist class—depending on the direction of Soviet diplomacy.

THE POPULAR FRONT IN DISGUISE

Still the problem remains unsolved: what is the difference between the so-called "People's Government" and a "Workers' Government"; between a "People's Government" and a "Capitalist Government?" Even the moderate demands listed by the Communist Party are impossible of achievement under any form of capitalist government whatever in the present stage of the decline of capitalism. No more than a

People's Front in Spain, or France, or the Kerensky Government in Russia, can any combination of forces except the working-class in power, supported by the other exploited sections of the population, solve the problems that hang over society like a malignant nightmare.

The disastrous class collaboration policy which led to the defeats in France and Spain is being perpetrated once again in Britain, but under conditions which guarantee even more disastrous consequences, while not even the shadow of an argument exists for the pursuance of such a policy. The People's Convention is the inheritance of the policy of the Popular Front—of an alliance between a section of the Conservative Party, the Liberal, Labour and Communist Parties, palming itself off as an alliance representing the "people." God knows with whom the alliance is supposed to be now. The alleged representatives of the people are all in the Government. It is a shadow of a shadow with whom the workers are to unite. The "Popular Front" is dead—so long live—the "People's Convention."

Nevertheless, if any worker airs his doubts, the miserable Communist Party leaders retort with lofty superiority over the "sectarian Trotskyists": "the masses are not interested in revolution at present, we must find a way to rouse them from their apathy and despair, we must cater for their immediate needs, as our programme does." Yes! together with their social democratic brothers, they demoralised, confused and betrayed the masses into this war. Their betrayals have led to this situation resulting in the present mood of the masses. The task of the revolutionaries is to develop and awaken the consciousness of the masses which cannot but bring them into collision with their oppressors. But the sham and the burlesque of the People's Convention is not necessary for that, and indeed it constitutes an obstacle. Lenin's teachings are there to give a simple guidance for those who wish to see.

THE LABOUR LEADERS

The toilers at present cannot see any alternative to the present regime but the victory of Hitler, and naturally, they will not accept that as a solution. This possibility cannot but provoke shudders of dread among the masses. That is why Bevin, Morrison and the other Labour leaders have been enabled to consummate their treachery so easily by entering the Government. This is a fine example of the Popular Front—that Popular Front Government of Churchill, Sinclair and Attlee, which Pollitt, Gallagher, Palme Dutt and the other Communist Party leaders shouted themselves hoarse for, before and during the early days of the war, and which they would be supporting even to-day if the dictates of Stalin's diplomacy required it.

The Communist Party has pointed out that the Labour bureaucracy remains the "main prop

of British Imperialism." How can this prop be knocked from under it? Only by winning away the masses of the workers who acquiesce in their leadership. This cannot be accomplished by mere verbal denunciations. The way to expose the Labour leaders is to put forward a series of demands which affect the day to day needs of the working-class. In order to expose them, revolutionists put forward the demand that the Labour leaders break completely with their collaboration with the capitalist government and take power on a platform of demands necessary to the tolerable existence of the masses in war; a programme of demands which finds its solution only through the expropriation of the capitalist class and the coming to power of the proletariat. Stalinism by its very nature cannot take this path because the Stalinist bureaucracy uses the British and other workers merely as tools of Soviet foreign policy and nothing else. This is why the People's Convention contains both sectarianism and opportunism.

The emphasis on the "people" as a homogeneous mass is completely incorrect. The "people" is divided into classes with their substrata. In Britain more than in any other country in the world, the working-class constitutes the decisive and overwhelming mass of the population, socially and numerically. The task of the revolutionaries is to sharpen the class consciousness of the workers by showing them the antagonisms between their own interests and those of their exploiters. The tradition of the independence of the Labour movement in Britain, which painfully and over a great period of time, broke away from collaboration with the Liberals and the Tories under mass pressure, is still strong, especially within the ranks of organised labour. While passively accepting Labour's entry into the Tory Government, the workers are uneasy about such a policy. The axis of our policy must be to appeal to the workers as a class, consistently, untiringly and clearly. Using this as the basis of agitation the Labour leaders will be put to the test and unmasked in the eyes of the masses. If the phrase that the Labour bureaucracy remains "the main prop of British Imperialism" has any meaning at all, it is that

their collaboration with the capitalists is necessary for the smooth functioning of the present regime. Starting with the clear analysis of the class relations, the whole basic assumption on which the "people's" movement will be built, is immediately destroyed. It is in this failure to appeal to the workers on a class basis that the treachery of the Communist Party leadership is exposed. That they recognise its significance is demonstrated by the occasional demagogic phrases directed to the instinctive class outlook of their worker element.

The agitation for *independent* policies as a class, fighting also for the needs of the other strata of the exploited section of the population—that always was the starting point for Lenin, even in an overwhelming middle class country like Russia. How much more so in a country like England where the working-class constitutes two-thirds of the population.

The People's Convention is a bastard hybrid with the bad features of an attempt to isolate and mislead the genuine revolutionary elements and the continuation of the old Popular Front line on the other. The advanced Communist Party workers must break with this conception, or they will be broken like their comrades in other countries.

Taking the situation as it is at present it is necessary to expose the Labour leaders who still retain the confidence of the large majority of the working-class. We demand that they cease all collaboration with the Churchill Government and assume full power on a platform of demands which culminates in the expropriation of the mines, banks, railways and industry and placing them in the hands of the workers; the right to self-determination of the colonial possessions of Britain; and an appeal to the German workers, on the basis of this complete destruction of the power of British Imperialism, for the overthrow of Hitler and German Imperialism and for the co-operation in the construction of the Socialist United States of Europe. This is Lenin's way of posing the problems of peace and war. Thus the way will be prepared for the development and extension of Soviets and the seizure of power through a revolutionary party.

Trade Union Purges In The Soviet Union

By JOHN G. WRIGHT

Stalin is now in the midst of a new mass purge. The first to suffer are the *Komsomol* (Russian Communist Youth) and the Trade Unions. Already purged, according to official statistics, are 137,637. Of this number 29,637 are *Komsomol* officials (out of a reported total of 45,580, that

is, the purge has hit a 65 per cent. majority of the *Komsomol* apparatus); and a somewhat more modest majority of 53 per cent. of the Trade Union apparatus, 108,000 officials out of a reported total of 203,821. A major operation, even for Stalin.

Whereas previous man-hunts were ostensibly conducted against "wreckers, diversionists, saboteurs, traitors, agents of the Mikado, agents of the Gestapo, agents of French, English and other imperialisms," etc., in a word, against "Trotskyites," this man-hunt is termed one against *darmoyedniki* (scoundrels who eat bread that they haven't earned) and *bezdelniki* (rascals who idle away their time).

In their milder moments, and of course, under their breath, the Soviet masses must have doubtless applied these homely and colloquial epithets of *darmoyednik* and *bezdelnik* to many a bureaucrat. But to have used these terms in public meant an invitation to the cellars of the G.P.U. and a bullet in the back of the head. Stalin is now, however, compelled to apply them, if not to the whole bureaucracy, at least to the purged section.

STALIN MUST EXPOSE HIS IMITATORS

Stalin to-day finds it necessary, as we shall describe, to reveal the true visage of his henchmen, their arbitrary rule, their parasitism, their vast padded staffs, embezzlements, petty grafts—even their complete isolation from the masses.

The bureaucratic summits of the Kremlin find it now necessary to indict the lesser and lower bureaucratic ranks for those very crimes and abominations which flourish below only as a pale reflection of the monstrosities at the top.

The majority of the Komsomol and the Trade Union officialdom has been charged with and has (naturally) pleaded guilty to: (1) lack of contact with the masses; (2) absence of a democratic regime; (3) failure to call not only membership meetings, but even committee meetings; (4) the upkeep of a swollen apparatus by diversion of membership dues and even sums allotted to industry; (5) padding the payrolls with *darmoyedniki* and *bezdelniki* and of similar practices, labelled, in the official double-talk, as "*deficiencies*."

CABLED STORIES SUPPRESSED

BY STALIN

No correspondent has been permitted to cable this story from the Soviet Union as, likewise, the story of Stalin's new anti-Labour legislation which was described last month. Even the provisions of the new laws against labour, which of course were published in *Pravda* for the information of the bureaucrats, were deleted from press dispatches, as Gedye of the *New York Times* reported upon leaving the Soviet Union. Moreover, for months at a time it is impossible to secure abroad copies of Soviet newspapers. We are now, however, able to tell the story.

On July 26 *Pravda* carried an innocuous notice to the effect that the Tenth Plenum of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (C.C.T.U.) would convene on the next day, with only one point on the agenda: "The Elimination of Certain Deficiencies in the Trade Union Apparatus and the Improvement of the Functioning of the Trade Union Organs." In point

of understatement this notice can be matched only by the wording of the announcement of the Ninth Plenum of the C.C.T.U., held a month previously, which it turned out, demanded "in the name of the Soviet trade unionists" the passage of the new anti-Labour legislation, but which was called, said the announcement, to consider "The Question of the 8-Hour Day." The style is the regime.

The members of the Plenum were graciously greeted on July 27 with a special editorial in *Pravda* addressed to the Plenum and entitled: "You must attract Broad Masses to Active Trade Union Work."

After an innocent and ritualistic introduction in which homage was paid to the achievements and importance of Trade Unions in Socialist Society and after affirming that "without their participation not a single serious economic or political measure is carried out," the editorial suddenly interposed an ominous "BUT."

WHAT THE "TRADE UNIONS" REALLY ARE

"But," snarled *Pravda*, "many leading workers in the Trade Unions forget the main thing; they forget mass work; they forget to maintain constant contact with the masses; they take to the road of functioning in an office bureaucratic manner through an enormous paid apparatus, and not infrequently they transform the trade union into a poorly functioning departmental bureau. These deficiencies are glaringly revealed in countless instances of a swollen paid trade union apparatus in individual enterprises, in departments as well as in regional committees and in Central Committees of the Trade Unions." (*Pravda*, July 27).

To its horror and indignation, *Pravda* had suddenly discovered that the Moscow Auto Plant alone supports 931 paid trade union officials. The Gorki Auto Plant is in an equally insufferable position with 648. "It is instructive," continues Stalin's official organ, "that the paid staff of certain trade unions does not decrease but on the contrary is increasing from year to year." For example, the State Trade Workers' Union had 2,807 officials in 1938; it was then split up into six independent unions and the paid staff increased to 3,546.

SQUANDERING THE WORKERS' DUES

Pravda immediately trumps that by citing no less instructive instances of how cultural-educational work is carried on. The workers in the Moscow Auto Plant, it appears, got together and organised a chorus and a dramatic circle. No sooner did the Trade Union learn of this than it appointed: One Chorus Leader, salary 800 roubles; one Assistant Chorus Leader, salary 500 roubles; one Art Director, 1,000 roubles; one Chief Concertmaster, 600 roubles; one Theatre Manager, 750 roubles... *Pravda* cuts its description of this pay-roll short with a modest, though mysterious "Etcetera" and goes on:

"Facts of this kind, and they are by no means isolated ones, bear witness to the fact that many trade unions are squandering the income of the trade unions, maintaining at the expense of this income a swollen paid apparatus, in some cases, plain *Darmoyedniki* and *Bezdelniki*."

After this discovery, *Pravda* is ready to tell the Plenum just how to attract the masses:

"This situation can no longer be tolerated... The main portion of the funds accruing from membership dues must be expended not on the upkeep of a paid apparatus but to provide cultural-educational service to union members and to render them material aid."

The Tenth Trade Union Plenum was well-attended by the chairmen and secretaries of the Central Committees of the various trade unions as well as by "several hundred Moscow trade union activists (read the G.P.U.—J.G.W.)."

SHVERNIK IN THE CONFESSIONAL

The reporter to the Plenum was Shvernik, Tomsky's successor as Chairman of the C.C.T.U. The account in *Pravda* gives only the high lights from his speech.

Following the line laid down by *Pravda*, he began by pointing out the achievements and importance of the Trade Unions, especially "on the threshold of Communism." The main source of trade union strength, said Shvernik, consists of ties with the masses. But unfortunately, he had to report that the Soviet Trade Unions "have still very weak ties with the masses." Why? Because of the "swollen apparatus of the trade union organisations."

"The paid apparatus devours the major part of the membership dues which should provide the means for carrying on cultural mass work and rendering material aid to union members and which are used instead by the trade union organs to maintain not a few *Darmoyedniki* and *Bezdelniki*." (*Pravda*, July 28). Who should know if not Shvernik?

THE SCOPE OF THE PURGE

After a proper pause, Shvernik announced to the assembled audience that it was now crystal clear that the paid staff could easily be cut one-half, even two-thirds. As a matter of fact, a Commission which had already studied the problem found it "possible to drop 108,000 paid workers from 169 trade union bodies."

"After their staffs are reduced," predicted Shvernik, "the Trade Unions will have the untrammelled opportunity of carrying on their work on the income derived from membership dues, and our State will obtain several hundred million roubles to use for further strengthening the economic power of our Socialist fatherland."

In closing, he promised a new regime. "It is necessary to call general membership meetings of the trade unions regularly."

The discussion which ensued was summed up by *Pravda* as follows: "The speakers cited a

great number of instances which illustrate the urgent need for liquidating the deficiencies in trade union work, paring down the swollen staffs and attracting the activists."

Moisseyev, Chairman of the Central Committee of the Central Construction Workers' Union, announced to the Plenum that the paid personnel of his union had already been cut "70 per cent., a saving of about 11 million roubles."

Meshakin, Chairman of the Flour Mill and Grain Elevator Workers' Union, was able to announce a reduction of 59.5 per cent.

But the speakers really warmed up to their task only during the next day's discussion, which *Pravda* summed up with satisfaction as follows:

"Every one who took the floor spoke of the excessively swollen apparatus which devours hundreds of millions of roubles and obstructs the advancement of trade union activists" (*Pravda*, July 30).

Levine, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Ural and West Siberian Industrial Construction Workers' Union, confessed that: "We reduced our staff 15-18 per cent. last February. But it became immediately clear to us that this was not enough. We have now dropped 876 out of 1,401 on our staff."

AN ASTOUNDING ADMISSION

Moskatov, one of the secretaries of the C.C.T.U., displayed exemplary zeal: "Suffice it to state that 25 Central Committees of the Trade Unions spent from 100 to 134 per cent. of the total membership dues collected in order to maintain their apparatus." He also singled out one Central Committee which contrived to expend on its apparatus "1,820,000 roubles while receiving dues to the sum of 1,350,000. Not so much as a kopek of the membership dues was spent on cultural work. More than that, the salaries of the trade union workers swallowed up in addition funds assigned to industrial organs." If so much is admitted, what must be the whole truth?

In his book "The Revolution Betrayed" Trotsky refers to a scandal which broke in 1930 when it was revealed that "out of the budget of the trade unions, amounting to 400,000,000 roubles, 80,000,000 go for the support of the personnel." That was 20 per cent. of the dues.

In 1940, admissions are blithely made of 100 to 134 per cent. of the dues expended for the support of *darmoyedniki* and *bezdelniki*. Here is a slight measure of the degeneration of the bureaucracy since 1930.

THE INCOME OF THE BUREAUCRACY

Vladimirov, with the preservation of his own skin and salary uppermost in his mind, blurted out that at the beginning of 1940 the Frozen-Meat Workers' Union carried 1,354 officials whose salaries totalled "more than 6 million roubles." The personnel was now cut 70 per cent., saving "many millions." The average annual wage of the bureaucrats in this union, therefore, was in excess of 4,400 roubles. This sum does not include, of course, the special privileges enjoyed

by the *darmoyedniki* and *bezdelniki*, namely, choice city apartments, country homes, vacation tours, sanatoria, private use of cars, etc. The average annual wage in the Soviet Union was officially put at 3,467 roubles (1938). For the mass of Soviet workers 1,800 roubles a year is a high wage. For the first time, we have an "official" gauge of the portion of the National income devoured by these self-admitted sloths and idlers.

But the most revealing data was cited by K. Nikolayeva, another of the secretaries of the C.C.T.U., who, in her anxiety not to be outdone, became overzealous and said the following:

"The swelling of the apparatus was noticed neither by the leaders of the Central Committees of the Trade Unions nor even (!) by us the members of the Presidium of the C.C.T.U. We were under the impression that our paid staff was a trifle over 150,000 and now it turns out that in 1939 there were 194,434 paid workers in 179 trade unions, while in 1940 there were 203,821. The sum spent on them amounted to 1,025,385,600 roubles."

With the above figures as a basis, the average annual wage of a trade union bureaucrat rises above 5,100 roubles.

AND THESE ARE THE SMALLER LEECHES !

The total annual wage fund for the whole U.S.S.R. was officially given as 34.95 billion in 1933 and 96.4 billion roubles in 1938. If a single one of the feebler branches of the bureaucracy swallowed up 1.02 billion a year, then how much was devoured by the assassins of the G.P.U., the

leeches in the Government apparatus and other more powerful branches up to the Supreme Gang in the Kremlin itself?

The discussion closed with a rabid attack on *Trud*, the official organ of the Trade Unions. The *Trud* is conducting "a poor fight in the struggle to eliminate deficiencies." Even the editors of *Trud* do not relish apparently the prospect of losing 70 per cent. and more of their subscribers.

Naturally, there is an intimate connection between this purge in July and the resistance of the masses to the June anti-Labour legislation. The Press has already been compelled to report thousands of violations.

WHY STALIN'S NEW SCAPEGOATS

Stalin must have new scapegoats; once again he has to resort to preventive measures. The familiar pattern of the purge reappears, but this time with significant alterations.

The preventive character of the purge finds its expression in the fact that the fire is levelled first *against those sections of the bureaucracy which are most directly subject to mass pressure.* The Youth and the Trade Unions must be discredited, and above all, rendered immune to pressure from below. At the same time, as a sop to the masses, a section of the bureaucracy is sacrificed. Stalin undoubtedly aims to limit the purge. But like all its predecessors, this purge has a logic of its own and must penetrate every nook and cranny of the regime. The masses will respond warmly and in their own way to such slogans as:

"Down with all *Darmoyedniki* and *Bezdelniki* with Stalin at their Head!"

MANIFESTO OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

A COMPLETE PROGRAM

A CALL TO ACTION

THE IMPERIALIST WAR AND THE PROLETARIAN WORLD REVOLUTION

by LEON TROTSKY

TWOPENCE

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