



## MARXIST- LENINIST STUDY

AN OUTLINE FOR  
GROUP DISCUSSION

# THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL ● 100 YEARS AFTER

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*Terence Africanus*

A HUNDRED YEARS ago, on September 28, 1864, a meeting was called in London to express the idea of unity among the workers of all countries, and to express solidarity with the Polish national struggle against tsarist colonialism. The meeting was called jointly by the leaders of the trade unions in London and by a group of French workers from Paris. It was attended by representatives of workers and revolutionaries from a number of European countries as well, and it was decided to give organizational expression to the ideas of the meeting by founding a new movement—the International Workingmen's Association. A committee was elected to direct the work. The headquarters were to be in London, and the chairman, G. Odger, and the secretary, W. R. Cremer were both leading British trade unionists. But the guiding spirit and inspiration of the movement throughout its ten stormy years of existence was Karl Marx, elected as a representative of the German workers. It was Marx who wrote the basic documents of the 'First Inter-

national'—the *Inaugural Address* and *Rules* which defined the aims and character of the Association.

Yet most of those who took part in the inaugural meeting of the First International or its General Council were very far from being Marxists in the sense in which we understand the term today. Though Marx and Engels had already in 1848 formulated their main ideas in that brilliant pamphlet the *Communist Manifesto*, not many of their colleagues in the Association were familiar with or supported those ideas. The British trade unionists were not unlike their counterparts of today: concerned principally with defending and advancing wages and working conditions against the constant attacks of the employers. They were in the democratic and internationalist tradition of the Chartists but nevertheless with a strong tendency to pragmatism and opportunism. The Italians were much under the influence of middle-class nationalist revolutionaries like Mazzini and Garibaldi. As for the French, all those who took part at the beginning were followers of Proudhon, a rather muddled philosopher who dreamed of reforming society by workers' mutual benefit societies and rejected both socialism and the conquest of political power by the working class.

For all that, Marx was the undoubted leader of the Association. His ideas and his outlook were the most formative and decisive, not by reason of any formal position he held, nor because his colleagues had studied or accepted his ideology, but by virtue of the depth and originality of his views, his strength of purpose and clarity of expression. He led because his ideas and his policies really reflected the interests and aspirations of the working people. Marx had the supreme gift of expressing those ideas in a way that could be understood by his colleagues and, because those colleagues were in the main honest and sincere men, the First International did not peter out into the blind alley of Proudhonism, or get lost in the marsh of trade union pragmatism. Under the guidance of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, it became a school of scientific, revolutionary socialism. It rallied the workers of Europe from the grave setbacks to the cause of democracy suffered after 1848, for fresh organizational and political advances which reached their climax in the Paris Commune, of immortal memory, the first workers' government. It established the firm theoretical and organizational principles for the Communist movement of our times, that has destroyed capitalism forever in a third of the world, and is leading the peoples towards socialism with irresistible momentum throughout the world, in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas.

When the First International was founded, it was confined to only a few countries of Western Europe—those where capitalist development had brought into being the working class. The organizations affiliated

to the Association varied: British craft unions, Proudhonist benefit societies, patriotic, democratic bodies, struggling for the unity of Italy, small workers' clubs, often of expatriates, sometimes illegal. Another thirty years were to pass before the establishment of mass socialist workers' parties on the pattern of the German Social Democratic Party.

The *Inaugural Address* written by Marx and adopted by the General Council in October 1864 concluded with the rousing slogan: *Workers of all lands, unite!* It declared that 'co-operative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions and consequently to be fostered by national means'; that 'the lords of land and the lords of capital' would 'lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labour'; that 'to conquer political power has therefore become the great duty of the working classes'. In these words we may discern the germ-ideas of socialism, the replacement of private ownership by common ownership of the means of production, the dictatorship of the proletariat. But the 'Address' did not explicitly put forward these ideas. To have attempted to do so would have split the Association; it would have wrecked at its very inception the union which Marx was so painstakingly striving for, between the real working class movement of the day and the advanced ideas of scientific socialism. Marxism was but one of the currents which made up the socialist movement of the day, and socialism itself was far from being the accepted aim of most movements of workers and oppressed people.

## **THE TRIUMPH OF MARXISM**

The brief hundred years which have passed have seen the most extraordinary change in this position. All the 'varieties' of socialism other than Marxism have failed to stand the test of time. Theoreticians like Proudhon, Owen, Lasalle, Duhring, Kropotkin and others, well known in Marx's time, are remembered mainly by scholars and historians, whereas Marx's name is familiar to almost everyone in every continent. It is a banner to the forces of liberation everywhere; it strikes fear and hatred into the hearts of the upholders of capitalism and reaction even more than it did while he was still alive. Never in history has any movement made such swift and universal progress.

The reason for this swift and dramatic triumph of Marxism is that it has been proved correct by events. As Marx foresaw, capitalism has proved unable to solve a single one of the huge problems of our day. Great as were its achievements, as compared with the feudal society which it superseded, capitalism is a dead end. It has achieved higher standards in a few privileged countries of West Europe and North America—but only at the expense of the enslavement, inhuman

exploitation and spoliation of the great majority of mankind in Africa, Asia and other 'undeveloped areas'—undeveloped precisely because imperialism, the unlovely creature of capitalism, has stunted and retarded their development. In two frightful world wars and countless and ceaseless wars of colonialist aggression, capitalist imperialism has slaughtered tens of millions of human beings and recklessly destroyed and squandered the fruits of human skill and toil, whose creators, the working people, live in poverty and squalor.

A hundred years ago, the pundits and professors of politics and economics saw in capitalism, the system of production for private profit and the exploitation of wage labour, the final answer to all the woes of mankind. It had liberated society and production from the shackles of feudalism; if there were minor defects, they said, these would be overcome in the process of development and reform. Marx's genius, the penetrating insight of his philosophical system of dialectical materialism, saw far beyond these complacent experts. He saw how the unplanned anarchy of capitalist production, the unsolvable contradiction between social means of making goods and private appropriation of profits, would lead to unending crises of unemployment, unending clashes between rival capitalist countries and between the contending social classes, until the workers gathered the strength, the will and the unity to overthrow capitalist rule and establish their own: a rule that would spell peace and plenty for all, in a classless, socialist society. Time has proved him right. Capitalism, in its final monopoly stage of imperialism, has grown into a frightful monster of destruction, which threatens all mankind with extinction. The great masses of working people and all the best, most far-seeing thinkers of our day, have turned their backs on capitalism and sought another road.

There is only one other road. We cannot go back into the past, to feudalism, chattel slavery or tribalism. The road into the future is the road to socialism and communism. And when we speak of socialism today we can only mean one thing: the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, as developed and continued in conditions of twentieth century imperialism by their greatest disciple, Vladimir Lenin, and as enriched and applied practically to complicated and widely different conditions by the talented Marxist-Leninists of a hundred countries of the world.

All other alleged panaceas for the ills of society have been tried and found fallacies, or impossible of fulfilment. As Lenin put it:

Russia achieved Marxism, the only correct revolutionary theory, virtually through *suffering*, by half a century of unprecedented torment and sacrifice, of unprecedented revolutionary heroism, incredible energy, devoted searching, study, testing in practice, disappointments, checking and comparison with European experience.

*'Left Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder.*

There have been many preachers of 'non-Marxian Socialism', or even (believe it or not!) of 'non-Leninist Marxism'. For a period after the first world war, Germany was governed by the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party, who denounced Lenin and the Bolsheviks for deserting the principles of Karl Marx, and quoted passages, torn from their context and emasculated of their revolutionary content, to 'prove' that they, and not the Leninists, were the true Marxian socialists. But it was Lenin and his comrades who went ahead to build socialism, to transform backward old Russia into the modern Soviet Union, the stronghold of workers' rule, socialism and national liberation for the peoples of the whole world. The road of the German Social Democrats, falsifiers of the living spirit of Marxism, led not to socialism, but to Hitler's 'national socialism', to the gas chambers and the concentration camps and the millions killed in the second world war.

In Britain, the Labour Party leaders claiming to have invented a special sort of British Socialism, which no one of them has yet succeeded in defining, won elections after the second world war and formed a government. They introduced some benefits for the workers, like the national health service; they nationalised some industries, like the railways and the coal mines, which the capitalists did not mind because these were running at a loss anyway. But all the main centres of monopoly capitalism, the finance houses and key industries were left in the hands of their private owners. All the institutions of power and privilege, including feudal survivals like the monarchy and the House of Lords, were left intact. Abroad, the Labour government continued the imperialist policy of the Tories, fighting colonial wars in an effort to preserve the Empire, and allying themselves with the most ferocious enemies of socialism, the American imperialists, in their cold war against national liberation and socialism. When the Labour Party lost the next elections they handed over to the Tories a Britain which differed little in essence from what it was before.

There have been 'socialist' Prime Ministers and Cabinets in France, in the Scandinavian countries, and many other capitalist lands. Not one of them has struck a fundamental blow against capitalist class dictatorship, or brought their country a step closer towards real socialism. The only countries in which socialism has been built, or in which the foundations for socialism are being laid, are those whose governments are in the hands of Parties whose members are following the course charted by the First International, by Marxism-Leninism. The whole world is learning, as Lenin said the Russian revolutionaries learnt, 'virtually through suffering', that the way to Communism is the only alternative to capitalism, with all its degradation of the human spirit, its racialism and greed, its unemployment and its wars.

## THE DIALECTICS OF DEBATE

Marxists have adapted the word 'dialectics' from the old Greek philosophers. It means conflict or contradiction—to us, as materialists, within the real world, within the processes of nature and the development of society. But the idealists applied it to the field of ideas, only. They meant that in the clash of opposing ideas, the process of debate, the truth would emerge. They were turning the problem upside down, of course. Our ideas reflect and are formed by the reality of our environment. The point of philosophy, as Marx pointed out, is not merely to explain the world, but to change it. And to change the world, we need more than arguments, we need organization and struggle. We cannot persuade the capitalist class to abandon its evil ways of exploiting the workers, and to embrace socialism. We cannot talk the colonialists of Southern Africa into abandoning national oppression and into embracing democracy. On such matters, which affect their own interests, their power, their profits and their privileges, these people, as a class, are not open to reason. One might as well try to persuade a lion to become a vegetarian.

That does not mean that we do not need arguments, or as it might be put vulgarly, that the only argument is a fist or a gun. Our enemies, the capitalists and imperialists, fear our arguments more than anything else, because they are only a small minority, and they depend for their continued rule on the support, active or passive, of the masses whose real interests are opposed to imperialism. That is why—since they are unable to answer our case, and to meet reason with reason—they suppress our parties and our national liberation movements; they jail our spokesmen or find other ways to prevent them writing or speaking to the people. Karl Marx spent years of his life making a weapon more damaging to capitalism than any atom bomb—his great book *Capital*. In this, as in other books as well, Marx mercilessly exposed the underlying structure and workings of capitalism. He destroyed forever the theoretical justifications and moral pretensions of the apologists for 'private enterprise', and like all great revolutionaries gave his followers their most indispensable weapon: the consciousness and conviction of the correctness of their cause which is essential for victory.

Argument, debate, is also essential among the opponents of reaction; to clarify the truth and enable the workers, peasants and intellectuals to discern truth from error. Marx, Lenin and all the great leaders of the workers never feared debate, even among fellow-members of the working class and liberation movements whose views and analyses differed sharply from their own. On the contrary, they welcomed every opportunity for controversy, on the level of principle, recognising that such discussions were an unrivalled means of education and clarifica-

tion, and having boundless confidence in the reasoning capacity and common sense of the working people. Some of the greatest educational works of the science of socialism were produced in the course of such debates, such as Engels' penetrating analysis of the German socialist Duhring, and Lenin's brilliant demolition of the various non-Marxist and pseudo-Marxist tendencies in the international and in the Russian labour movements.

A splendid example of such invaluable debates occurred during the early days of the International Workingmen's Association. An English member of the General Council, Weston, who was an old follower of the famous Utopian socialist, Robert Owen, introduced a discussion on the question of wages. He claimed that wage-increases could not benefit the working class generally, and that if a trade union won wage increases for one section of the workers, it would be to the disadvantage of the others. Marx prepared a full reply to these erroneous arguments in a document (published as the booklet *Value, Price and Profit*), which remains to this day an outstanding illustration of how complicated economic questions can be presented in a lucid and simple way. Anyone wishing to study *Capital* would do well to read this booklet first. Remarkable too is the way in which Marx completely destroyed Weston's false ideas without the faintest shadow of a personal attack, or anything which could antagonize the man himself. Indeed, he began by complimenting Weston on his 'moral courage' in putting forward such ideas in a gathering—consisting of trade unionists and workers—where they were bound to be extremely unpopular.

Such debates and polemics could only strengthen the movement and clarify its ideas; they could not lead to splits and divisions. Unfortunately, as time went on, a very different sort of 'polemics' appeared in the First International. These were of a type which did split and were designed to split, in which not only matters of principle and policy but also personal ambitions were at stake, and in which intrigues and slanders replaced honest debate. Such was the nature of the wretched fight which Bakunin and the 'ultra-revolutionary' anarchists carried on, a fight which split the Association from top to bottom and in the end wrecked it.

## **THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL**

The anarchists succeeded in disrupting the International Workingmen's Association, already weakened by right-wing desertions after the defeat of the Paris Commune. By then its main mission had already been accomplished. The seeds of revolutionary Marxism had been sown abroad; they took deep root in a number of countries, and burgeoned forth in the form of the mass socialist workers' parties in Europe,

parties adhering to the internationalist conceptions of the Association. These conceptions found their organizational form in the establishment, on July 14, 1889, of the Socialist International, known as the Second International.

At the core of the Second International was the German Social-Democratic Party, which had grown up under the personal influence of Marx and Engels. It was the biggest and most influential party of the movement, and the model party at that time. Nevertheless, from its inception it was not wholly Marxist; and it continued to harbour non-Marxist and anti-Marxist trends and currents which in the end destroyed both it and the Second International as fighting organs of the working class. At its origin the German Social-Democratic Party marked a coming together of the Marxists, headed by Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, and the followers of Ferdinand Lasalle, founder of the General Association of German Workers, an opportunist and supporter of Prussian imperialism.

These two trends, the revolutionary Marxist trend and the right-wing opportunist trend, both existed for many years in the Party: in fact they were reflected in all the Parties which belonged to and made up the Second International. Some of the German leaders, headed by Eduard Bernstein, openly said that Marx's views were out of date and should be revised; they suggested that the workers should try to improve capitalism by means of gradual reforms rather than to end it and replace it with socialism. These revisionist views were rejected by the German Party at that time, and by the whole of the Second International. But many continued to harbour such ideas, and to carry them out in practice. Some of the Parties in the Second International, like the British Labour Party never accepted Marxism, even formally. Others, like Kautsky, upheld Marxism formally, in words, and called themselves Marxists; but in practice they watered Marxist theory down and blunted its revolutionary edge. There was continuous friction in the International between such opportunist tendencies, and the trend of revolutionary Marxism represented by Lenin and the Russian Bolshevik Party, by Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany, and many others.

The main international issues over which the two trends clashed were those of colonialism and war. The revolutionaries fought hard to get the International to adopt a consistent socialist policy towards the millions of oppressed people in the countries enslaved by imperialism, to assist and encourage the national liberation movements and to demand independence for the colonies. But the opportunists consistently evaded this question and betrayed their duty. Lenin, in his masterly essay *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, and other



writings, exposed the roots of their thinking and conduct. Imperialism, monopoly capitalism, he pointed out, amassed huge super-profits out of its colonial investments, and out of these profits it was able to afford certain concessions to a section of the organized workers in the countries of advanced capitalist development. But the 'price' for such concessions was that some of the labour leaders became junior partners and supporters of imperialism, 'labour lieutenants of the capitalist class'.

On the eve of the first world war of 1914-1918, a Congress of the Second International held at Basle, in Switzerland, discussed the dangerous war situation which was building up as a result of the rival claims of the British, French and Russian imperialists, on the one hand, and those of the German and Austro-Hungarian imperialists on the other. Under pressure from the revolutionaries, Lenin and Luxemburg, the Congress adopted a strong resolution, urging the workers to fight to prevent the outbreak of war, and should it nevertheless break out, to oppose it, and to fight for the overthrow of their respective governments and the downfall of capitalist class rule.

It was a victory on paper only. As soon as the war broke out, the big socialist Parties in all the main capitalist countries ignored the resolution of the International. The German Social-Democratic Party, the British Labour Party, the French Socialist Party and others each decided to support 'its own' capitalist government, and called on the workers to shoot down their fellow-workers of other countries. This betrayal was a death-blow to the Second International as an expression of working class, socialist internationalism. After the war, the leaders of some of the socialist parties came together to 're-establish' the Second International, and indeed some sort of Committee was established with representatives of the British Labour Party and some of the other West European socialist parties. It still exists today, though not many people ever hear about it or get to know about it. No one could take it seriously as an important international force; as the inspiration and hope of millions of workers which it was until 1914.

## **THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL**

The reason for the collapse of the Second International is to be found in Lenin's analysis of imperialism and its effects on the labour movement; benefiting by some crumbs from the imperialists' table, derived from their loot and exploitation of colonial people, a section of the labour leadership had become infected with chauvinist and imperialist ideas themselves, and merely paid lip-service to internationalism.

This was by no means true of all the members of the Second International. In Russia, the Bolshevik Party denounced the war, stood by

the Basle Resolution and called for the overthrow of tsarism. In Germany, Karl Liebknecht defied his Social-Democratic Party whip and crossed the floor of the Reichstag (Parliament) to vote against giving war credits to the Kaiser. In many countries groups of revolutionary socialists denounced the sell-out by their leaders and opposed the imperialist war.

In South Africa the Chairman of the Labour Party, Bill Andrews, opposed the war in Parliament. Right wing, jingo elements in the Party started a witch-hunt against Andrews and his supporters, and hounded them out of the leadership. Undeterred, Andrews, Ivon Jones, S. P. Bunting and other militants established the International Socialist League to carry on the struggle.

After the war and the world-historic victory of the workers and the oppressed people of the former tsarist empire in the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917, the revolutionary Marxist parties of all countries came together to form the Third International. This carried forward the best traditions of the First and the Second Internationals. But it was necessary to make a clean break with the Social-Democratic leaders of the Second International. The Bolsheviks changed the name of their Party from 'the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party' to the 'Communist Party'. There was historic justification for this change—the first comprehensive summary of Marx' and Engels' programme was *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*—and the great betrayal of 1914 had discredited the very name 'Social-Democratic'. The new International was called 'The Communist International'. Its headquarters were naturally in the Soviet Union, and all the Communist Parties looked upon the Bolshevik Party as a model and an inspiration, for it was the first in the world to lead a successful workers' revolution and to embark upon the tremendous task of building socialism.

Among the first Parties to affiliate to the Third International was the International Socialist League of South Africa, which in 1921 joined with other Marxist groups in the country to form the Communist Party. Its leaders were for the most part seasoned fighters with many years of experience in the trade union and labour movement. But the same was not true of the members and leaders of all the young Communist Parties, some of them newly-formed, which affiliated to the Communist International. Some of these were enthusiastic people, often from a middle-class background, but with little understanding of Marxism and less experience of the struggle. Impatient for 'revolution right away', they were not prepared to face the hard slogging work of persuasion and organization, often lasting many long and thankless years, which are the lot of any serious revolutionary. They denounced the trade unions and other mass organizations which had so painfully

been built up by the working people, declaring that the workers should resign from such 'reactionary' bodies and form new unions on 'pure Marxist' lines. They said it was useless to take part in Parliamentary elections; these merely spread illusions about Parliaments and diverted the attention of the Communists from their task of 'preparing for revolution'. They said the central task of the Communists in the capitalist countries was not to attack the ruling classes but to concentrate on exposing the reformist Labour and Social-Democratic leaders.

In his brilliant essay *'Left-Wing' Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin patiently analysed the errors of these 'ultra-revolutionaries'. He showed that the struggle of the working class for power was a long and complicated process, at each stage of which it was necessary to isolate the main enemy and to gain allies, however vacillating and unreliable they might be. It was necessary to work among the masses wherever they were to be found, in the trade unions and other mass organizations, even if these were under right-wing leadership. To boycott Parliamentary and other elections—unless there were special circumstances, for example a revolutionary situation in which the masses themselves had already lost all confidence in parliaments—was merely to leave the political field clear for the capitalists and their agents, and to lose the opportunity for revolutionary work. Lenin also, in this essay, traced the origin of this ultra-revolutionary 'Leftism'. It reflected the social position of the petty bourgeois, swinging in between the workers and the capitalists. One day, following a small victory, they would be full of enthusiasm and confidence, imagining that victory was already won and attacking the workers' leaders for being too slow and 'compromising'. But, the next day, a small setback would be enough to cast them into despair.

Some of those criticised by Lenin heeded his wise words and proved themselves to be outstanding Communists. Others attacked him as a 'compromiser'. They completely failed to understand the need to combine firmness of revolutionary principle with flexibility of tactics, the need for united action of workers, peasants and other progressive strata in various phases of historical development, for unity of Communists and non-Communists in the labour, national liberation and other progressive movements. Such romantic, unstable elements are attracted to every revolutionary movement as to a magnet. They suffer from an irresistible 'itch' to substitute revolutionary phrases for hard revolutionary work. If they should gain the leadership of any movement they are apt to gamble its achievements and resources in reckless, sometimes disastrous, adventures. Failing to gain the leadership, their malice knows no bounds. Such were the followers of Bakunin in the First International and of Trotsky in the Third.

## TROTSKY AND THE TROTSKYITES

Trotsky had never been a Bolshevik in the years before 1917. Sometimes he was with the Mensheviks—the Russian counterparts of the German or British reformist labour leaders—sometimes he formed a third, intermediate group of his own. But just before the October Revolution he and his group joined the Communist Party *en bloc*. He was immediately promoted to a leading position, and occupied a senior place in the Central Committee and the Soviet government in the period of the Revolution and the immediately following years. Despite these important services, Trotsky suffered from serious weaknesses. He lacked confidence in the Russian workers, and especially in their allies, the peasants. For this and other reasons, he underestimated the profound historical importance of the Soviet revolution, regarding it merely as a prelude to the ‘real thing’—the workers’ revolution in Western Europe, which he was convinced was very near, and without which he was convinced the Soviet Union would collapse. This made him oppose Lenin’s line of immediate peace with the German imperialists who had invaded deep into Russia. Lenin and the Central Committee of the Party said that it was vital to come to terms—even the brutally unfair and humiliating terms dictated by the Germans—to gain a breathing space for the young workers’ state to recover and consolidate. But, imagining that the continuation of hostilities would speed the German and Western revolution, Trotsky opposed, even, it is said, sabotaged this line.

Later, after Lenin’s death, Trotsky and his supporters opposed the policy of the majority of the Central Committee of the Party, of building socialism in the Soviet Union. They said it was impossible to establish socialism in one country, even one as huge and rich in resources as the U.S.S.R. They believed that the peasants, the great majority of the Russian population at that time, were a fundamentally conservative or even reactionary force working for the restoration of capitalism in the country. The conclusion they drew from these arguments was that the main task of the Soviet government was to encourage the ‘permanent revolution’ in the rest of the world. Refusing to accept the decision of the majority of the Central Committee and the Party membership, they continued to carry on a factional struggle for their line. As this struggle grew in intensity it became more and more bitter and unprincipled. The Trotskyite ‘Left’ opposition joined hands with the Right opposition led by Bukharin and others. They became possessed by one main object only: to get rid of the majority of the Central Committee represented by the general secretary, Stalin. And they pursued this object relentlessly, obsessively, regardless of the damage to the country, the workers’ cause and the Communist movement.

The issues were multiplied to cover every aspect of internal and external Soviet policy. According to the 'Trotskyites', Stalin and the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. could do nothing right; with evil motives, they were 'betraying' the revolution and Communism. The quarrel spread into the Communist International. Every conceivable mistake in every Party (and what revolutionary movement has been without mistakes?) was laid at the door of 'Stalinism' and the 'Stalinists'. At first the C.P.S.U. reacted to these activities with forbearance, in the Leninist spirit of permitting free debate in the Party and settling disputes by democratic procedures rather than administrative measures. On a number of occasions, the factionalists were expelled from the Party, then readmitted to leading positions on their undertaking to desist from factionalism. They never observed these undertakings. Eventually Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Union; abroad he devoted himself to organizing an international movement under the pretentious title of the 'Fourth International' whose principal, if not only, purpose was to criticize and attack the Soviet government and the leaders of all the other Communist Parties in the International, since all these leaders considered it their revolutionary duty to defend the U.S.S.R., which—then as now—was the main target for the incessant attacks and slanders of international imperialism, fascism and reaction.

It is perhaps difficult for young people today to imagine the bitterness of this split or the mischief it wrought in the movement. The Trotskyites formed themselves into an international sect or order. Many of them were originally admirers of the Soviet Union who became disappointed because it did not rapidly enough transform itself into the Utopia of their dreams, or because of its real failings and shortcomings. Others were Communists who had become disgruntled or soured by grievances, genuine or imagined, against the Party leadership in this or that country. Many were ardent young revolutionaries impatient that the workers were too slow to rise against the oppressors, and convinced that the cause was to be found in the timidity or 'treachery' of the Communists, rather than in the objective circumstances. But whatever their motives, sincere or otherwise, in practice the Trotskyites were an unmitigated nuisance in the international labour and liberation movements, a source of disruption and division everywhere. They seemed to have no policy of their own, but just to be waiting to see what the Communists would say in order to condemn it and put forward an opposite viewpoint.

In South Africa the Trotskyites were most successful among the Coloured community in Cape Town—not among the workers, but among the teachers and other intellectuals who predominated in the

national movements. The effects were regrettable in the extreme. Some intellectuals seemed to be attracted to this particular sect because it gave them the opportunity to be extremely 'revolutionary' in words while in practice doing nothing that would bring them into conflict with the authorities or endanger their jobs. They were very good at destructive criticism, but once elected to office in any organisation, their sectarianism, their weakness for revolutionary phrasemongering and their recurrent tendency to quarrel among themselves soon led to the collapse of that organisation. Such was the fate of the African People's Organization: the pioneer Coloured national liberation movement. The result was the virtual isolation of an important section of the Coloured community in the Cape from all the historic struggles of the African National Congress and its allies during the 'fifties: for, sneering and criticizing, these leaders encouraged the people to abstain from participation in the Defiance Campaign and the Congress of the People, and to go on working during the great series of national general strikes and stay-at-homes from 1950 onwards.

In some countries the supporters of Trotsky went even further. In the midst of the Spanish civil war against the Franco rising, which was sponsored by Hitler and Mussolini, the 'P.O.U.M.' ('Marxist Workers' Unity Party') went so far as to organize an 'armed revolt' against the Republic behind the lines. An unending stream of envenomed propaganda was poured out declaring that capitalism had been restored in the U.S.S.R., that the system was on the verge of collapse, that the workers were seething with revolt, that the Communist leaders all over the world had 'sold out'. The Trotskyites said, and probably actually believed, that the moment the Soviet Union was attacked by an external enemy the state would collapse and a new revolution would take place, led by the 'Left Opposition'.

These beliefs and hopes were rudely shattered by reality. When Hitler attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, the workers and peasants rose like one man to defend their socialist motherland. The great patriotic war of the Soviet people, undoubtedly the severest test ever of endurance, sacrifice and unity of a whole society in conditions of total war, put 'paid' once and for all to the central thesis of Trotskyism, and deprived their movement of any rational basis. Whatever mistakes and shortcomings of Soviet society—and these were not a few—and however heavy the cost, the building of socialism in one country had been successfully accomplished. This was the original cause of the dispute, and history had utterly vindicated the main line of the Party. Had the five-year plans and the collectivization of agriculture not been accomplished with such tremendous sacrifice and effort, the Soviet Union could not have withstood the onslaught of Hitler's gigantic

war-machine, flushed with the conquest of all Europe, and armed by the resources of the entire continent.

### **ANOTHER SIDE TO THE MISCHIEF**

There was another deeply regrettable side to the mischief of the factional struggle started by the Trotskyites in the C.P.S.U. and the international Communist movement. It began, as we have seen, over a profoundly important question of principle. But soon that issue was lost sight of as the Trotskyites spread their 'hate' campaign to cover every single question of Soviet domestic and external policy, every aspect of policy of every Communist Party. Incredibly spiteful and abusive, they seemed to be vying with the Whiteguard emigres and the Nazis in heaping slander on the Soviet Union.

The reaction of the Communists in the Soviet Union and elsewhere was naturally one of profound anger and indignation. But anger and indignation alone are poor guides to action. The main target of Trotskyite abuse and slander was Stalin, the general secretary of the C.P.S.U. Stalin, as Lenin had pointed out before his death, had his faults, and serious ones too. But, faced with this incessant barrage of abuse and attack, the Communists regarded Stalin not just as an individual, but as a symbol of the line of the Party and the International, of the very principles and foundations of Marxism-Leninism. His faults were forgotten and his virtues were magnified until he seemed to be a super-man. Had he really been a super-man as he was painted, had he the personal modesty, the common-sense humanity, of a Marx or a Lenin, this bad tendency would have been discouraged and overcome. Unfortunately, among his weaknesses was a vanity that did not diminish with his years; he grew to tolerate and even encourage flattery and idolatry with an increasing appetite.

It was in this situation that the ugly practices of the cult of the individual grew and flourished. To criticize Stalin or the cult of Stalin became an act of disloyalty and treachery. A disease of 'orthodoxy' and conformity, foreign to the questing, critical spirit of Marxism, spread everywhere. Creative thought and initiative were paralysed; with comrades hesitating to break new ground or take decisions lest they might be deviating from the Party line. Even history was rewritten to magnify the role of Stalin and diminish and belittle his colleagues. Worst of all, following the assassination of the leading Communist Sergei Kirov, a wave of 'security-consciousness' spread throughout the Soviet Union, amounting to panic. Directed by a succession of police-chiefs, each of whom was himself found subsequently to be corrupt—Yezhov, Yagoda, Beria—terror spread in the country. Not only elements inimical to the regime, who were always an insignificant

minority, but its loyal supporters, including Party members and Party leaders, fell under suspicion and were unjustly punished. The informer came into his own, and encouragement was given to mean self-seekers anxious to settle old scores or eliminate rivals.

It is hard to overstate the damage caused by these happenings not only in the Soviet Union itself, but throughout the international Communist movement. Inevitably these facts reached the outside world; the imperialists and fascists seized upon them, magnified and distorted them, left out of the picture all the splendid positive achievements of the Soviet Union. Their object was not of course to defend justice and socialist legality; it was to defame the Soviet Union and undermine the cause of socialism. The natural reaction of Communists elsewhere was to deny all these allegations as slanders. There was every justification for this reaction. For years the bourgeois press and propaganda machinery had in fact been manufacturing the most outrageous lies against Soviet Russia. With the rise of Hitler's Reich, encouraged by the big imperialist powers in its aggressive attitude, a very real threat had developed towards the Soviet Union, whose defence was rightly regarded as the first duty of every class-conscious worker and fighter for human freedom. But it was a vicious circle; in the process the Communists defended and became infected by something that did not belong to Communism at all—the cult of the individual leader.

Over the past ten years, and especially since the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U., the most serious and sustained efforts have been made to eliminate this harmful cult, and its consequences. It has been a difficult and painful task, but one of inestimable value to the whole Communist movement, throwing open the windows to admit the fresh air of critical and creative Marxist thinking and initiative. Even today the Stalin cult has its defenders and remnants in the movement, but in the main the task has been successfully accomplished. That task was not to balance the wrongs of the cult against Stalin's major contributions—an assessment which the future will be able to make more objectively than ourselves—but to restore the principles of collective leadership and Leninist standards of democracy in the Party and in public life. Only in this way could the repetition of this un-Communist tendency—a throwback to pre-socialist, servile habits of thought and conduct—be prevented.

## **IN THE INTERNATIONAL**

The Communist International differed from its predecessors, the First and the Second Internationals, not only by virtue of the precision and the uncompromisingly revolutionary character of its principles, designed to exclude opportunists, but also in regard to its Constitution.



Reacting against the utter indiscipline and vulgar nationalism of the Social-Democratic Parties, which led to the collapse of the Second International, the Third set out to be a single world organization, of which the local Party in each country was to be merely a 'section'. It seemed a sound theory. And, indeed, in the first years of the International the experience of the C.P.S.U. and other senior parties was of invaluable assistance in establishing and guiding new Communist Parties, in equipping them with an understanding of Marxism-Leninism.

The Third International differed in another most important respect from its predecessors. Inevitably the First International had been confined to the more industrially advanced countries of Western Europe and North America. The *Rules*, published in 1864, had declared its principles as applying to 'all men, without regard to colour, creed or nationality'. In practice, however, due to the dead hand of colonialism, there were no workers' organizations to speak of in Asia, Africa and South America at that time, nor any means of contacting them if there had been. And, in the Second International, the predominant influence of the imperialistically-minded right-wing Labour leaders had meant that socialism was regarded as the exclusive concern of the European workers and the burning problems of national liberation in the colonies never featured seriously on the agenda. All this was changed with the establishment of the Communist International.

Lenin had always been a fiery fighter for the rights of oppressed nations. He saw the dynamic potentialities of the vast anti-colonialist upsurge, embracing the majority of the people of the world, to transform the whole international situation. He regarded the masses of Asian, African and other colonized workers and peasants not as a 'problem', but as comrades and fighting allies in the common struggle against imperialism. Hence, he proposed at the Second Congress of the Communist International to add the historic slogan of Marx and Engels, thus: *Workers of all countries and oppressed peoples, unite!* For the first time, representatives of the enslaved workers and peoples of Asia, Africa and Central and South America were drawn into the mainstream of the international working class movement, enriching its policy and character and drawing on its knowledge and experience for the benefit of their own people. Under the inspiration of the Communist International, Communist Parties were established in many colonies and semi-colonies; the pioneer Communist Party of our continent, that of South Africa, was followed by others in a number of African countries.

In this respect and in many others the Communist International played a splendid and irreplaceable role in the onward march of man-

kind towards a socialist and Communist movement. In speaking, as one must also do, of certain negative features, one should never forget this immortal positive contribution to the liberation of humanity.

Unfortunately the concept of a highly centralized and closely knit world party has certain latent weaknesses which began to show themselves over the course of time. It is possible and very desirable and necessary for an international working class organization to carry out the sort of broad function which the First International did in Marx' day: to work out in common the broad main trends of the day, and in the light of this analysis to plan the overall strategy of solidarity and advance. Communists need to arrive at a common approach on the big world questions of war and peace, a foreign policy, in all countries, which would serve the needs of the masses. But once an international organization attempts to solve detailed problems of Party policy and tactics in a large number of countries each differing intricately over a wide range of conditions and circumstances, gross errors are unavoidable. Marxism-Leninism is not a set of formulae which enables one, in the seclusion of a far-away academy, to work out specific programmes and slogans for a fighting party. It is a set of tools, the use of which enables such a party to work out a correct policy and strategy only in the thick of the ever-changing battle, with a detailed knowledge of the terrain, the relationship of forces, the shifts and strains of the struggle.

The Sixth World Congress of the International in 1928 discussed the situation in South Africa and the policy of the Party. It summed up its deliberations by adopting, against the will of the South African delegation, the perspective slogan of an 'Independent Native Republic'. Looked back at with the wisdom of forty years experience, we see that was not a suitable slogan and it has never been revived. All the same, the discussion and the decision rendered a profound service to the Party and the people of our country. They enabled the healthy elements in the Party to overcome the remnants of white chauvinism which lingered within its ranks. They focused the attention of the Party on the central issue in South Africa, the struggle of the revolutionary masses of oppressed people for national liberation from the special form of colonialism embodied in the political and economic structure of the country. A decisive turn was made from which the Party has never retreated and which finds its most complete and scientific expression in the Party programme, *The Road to South African Freedom*.

If the International had confined itself to correcting deviations from Marxism-Leninism and directing the Party's attention towards its inescapable historic task of building a united front for the national-democratic revolution, it would have proved an unmixed blessing for

our country and for Africa. It did not do so. The South African Communists fell, in the late twenties and early thirties, to 'talmudic' disputes among themselves over the correct 'interpretation' of the slogan, contending groups appealing to the executive committee of the International for a ruling as if it were a sort of supreme court. This was a temptation to the executive, which it did not resist, to dabble in the details of South African affairs, on which it was, naturally, not intimately informed. It was also an excuse for the South African Communists to escape their duty to make a detailed study of all aspects of their own country and to hammer out policy decisions on the anvil of collective and democratic discussion, within the Party.

The harm was compounded in the early thirties when a directive came from the executive of the International that all the affiliated Parties should be 'Bolshevized'. It is true that the structure of many of the affiliated Parties was too loose, and that Social-Democratic political and organizational ideas were still prevalent in many of them. But a mechanical directive intended to be applicable to all Parties, irrespective of the dialectics of their own inner development, was liable to do more harm than good. It is probable that much harm was done to a number of Parties at this time; certainly this was true in South Africa. Using the directive as their text, a sectarian 'ultra-left' group came into control of the Party. They began expelling a number of veteran Communists, including Bunting and Andrews, without a shadow of democratic procedures. Backed by the International, they all but wrecked the Party, and the brief period of their ascendancy left a scar which will not soon be forgotten. The development of the Stalin cult in the Soviet Union must be held largely responsible for such arbitrary twisting of the purposes and functions of the International, for the C.P.S.U. occupied a unique position of authority and prestige. Many other Parties also suffered as a result; a sectarian, dogmatic phase ensued in which the Parties affiliated to the Communist International were unable to recognize, or take timely and adequate steps to rally the people against, the growing menace of fascism and war.

## **UNITED FRONT**

This situation was corrected by the Seventh—and last—World Congress of the International, at which the main reports were given by Dimitrov, who spoke on the need to counter the international fascist counterrevolution with a united front of the workers and the whole people, and by Togliatti, who explained the complex international situation, then (1937) on the brink of erupting into the second world war. The Congress implicitly recognized the limitations of an international organization of Marxist political parties. It was important,

in fact essential, for such parties to get together from time to time to discuss the main problems and world developments facing the movement as a whole. It was equally essential for each Party to have the fullest autonomy, to have the right and the inescapable duty to study and master the intricate realities of the changing political and economic set-up in its own country, to enter into short or long term alliances with other progressive movements in the interests of the workers, to guide their actions according to the precise realities of time and place. Otherwise local initiative would be stifled and tragic errors committed.

Dimitrov gave a brilliant illustration of how a German comrade, before the Hitler regime, tried to address unemployed workers by reciting to them the decisions of the latest session of the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The workers soon became bored and hooted him off the platform. The lesson—that Communists must learn to speak simply and directly to the workers in their own language—had a far wider application. The workers and the oppressed people of the world should indeed *unite*, as Marx and Lenin had taught. But the form of their unity could not be that of a single world *party*, whose leadership, like a general staff, could be expected to issue detailed directives to its ‘sections’.

The formal structure of the Communist International was useful in its earlier period, when most of the Parties were small, young and inexperienced, and when many of the greatest writings of Marx and especially of Lenin were not available in translation. But with the development of big and influential Communist Parties in many countries, with their own cadres of tried and talented Marxist-Leninists, this structure had become a hindrance. After the Seventh Congress, most of the affiliated Parties proved their maturity and the correctness of this general approach by remarkable political and organizational advances. Naturally mistakes were made as well, but the Parties had no one to blame for such mistakes but themselves. It may be observed that one learns a thousand times more from one’s own experience and mistakes than from those of anyone else.

In 1943, all the Communist Parties were playing an independent and glorious role in extremely varied conditions, in national united anti-fascist and national fronts. The Communist International had helped bring most of these Parties into being and to train and purify them in their most formative periods; but with this historic mission fulfilled, and in the midst of a life-and-death world conflict against nazism and fascism, the Third International was dissolved.

## **AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

The second world war ended in the crushing defeat of the fascist

Axis powers. The Soviet Union had played the foremost part in this epic struggle; a great tidal wave of national liberation stormed through the world. The enslaved colonial peoples arose to wrest their independence from imperialist domination; and in Eastern and Central Europe the people, under the leadership of the Communists, settled their accounts with the corrupt capitalist rulers who had sold their countries to Hitler.

When the dust lifted from the battlefields a completely new situation confronted the peoples of a world very different from that which existed in the times of the First, the Second and the Third Internationals. It was no longer a world dominated by imperialism. The Soviet Union and Mongolia had been joined by no less than eleven more countries of Europe and Asia advancing to socialism under Communist leadership, including China, with the most numerous population of any country. Practically all of Asia and most of Africa broke away from foreign domination, in a continuing revolution for full independence and equality whose logic is inevitably impelling them more and more in a socialist direction. And this process is still in full swing: Cuba is the pioneer of national independence and socialism in the Americas, her example inspiring all the victims of United States' neo-colonialism with hope and the spirit of rebellion. In Southern Africa, and in the Portuguese African colonies, a bitter struggle is raging between the forces of apartheid and reaction, backed up by international imperialism, and the heroic national liberation movements.

In these new conditions, vital new problems, whose solution cannot be postponed, face the workers and oppressed people of all countries and their Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties. The great slogan *Workers and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!* has an urgency and a reality greater than ever before. For, though we have won great and decisive victories, terrible dangers and difficulties still face us.

For Marx and the First International the struggle for peace, against piratical wars, for a sane and just foreign policy, formed 'part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes'. For our generation, the triggering off of a global nuclear conflict by the Goldwater type of fascist lunatic would mean a day of wrath bringing unimaginable mass slaughter and destruction to every country. The forces of the people, alert for peace, can prevent this catastrophe; but only if we maintain the utmost unity, vigilance and clarity of purpose.

Unity and clarity of common purpose is essential in many other fields as well. Problems of state, economic and other relations between the socialist countries; of co-operation between workers of the metropolitan countries and those of their colonies and semi-colonies against the common enemy; of evolving a common line of policy for Communists

in the interests of the national liberation, peace, trade union, women's, youth and other progressive movements; of co-ordinating solidarity actions with the victims of imperialist and fascist oppression—all these and a hundred other immediate issues need constant review and the working out of Marxist solutions in an ever-changing world. Clearly, nothing would more hamper our cause and please the imperialists than a failure of the Communists to achieve unity, and the dissipation of our energies in quarrels among ourselves.

A number of steps have been taken in recent years to fill this obvious need. Chief among these were the famous gatherings of representatives of Communist and Workers' Parties which took place in 1957 and in 1960. At these meetings unanimity was achieved on all the principal issues facing the workers and oppressed people. Although they came from every corner of the world, and were living and working in an endless variety of differing circumstances, the Communists were able to reach agreement on the characterization of the nature of our epoch, in which mankind is moving from capitalism to socialism, on the need for peaceful coexistence between states in different stages of social development, on our tasks in the struggle for peace, democracy, national liberation and socialism. Methods were decided upon to settle any disagreements that might arise in the future, methods of joint consultation between Parties. It was hoped that in this way we would achieve the constant aim of the Marxists over the past century, the aim of the 'three Internationals'—to ensure unity.

### **A SERIOUS PROBLEM**

It is most disturbing to have to record that these hopes have not been fulfilled. First the Albanian Party of Labour, and then the Chinese Communist Party, have come out against a number of the decisions jointly arrived at. Worse still, they and their followers have not maintained their arguments on a level of principle; they have descended to abuse and misrepresentations, accusing the C.P.S.U. and its secretary, comrade Khrushchov, as well as the majority of Communist Parties which uphold the common decisions, of 'revisionism', of being traitors and downright enemies of the workers and oppressed people. Their supporters in a number of countries have broken away from their Parties to form rival factions and organizations.

To write about the historic anniversary of Marx' International without drawing attention to this problem would be empty. For this is the most serious problem of international working class unity today: the most serious, in fact, that has ever existed. The present threat to unity comes not from a small clique of petty-bourgeois 'ultra-revolutionaries' like Trotsky's group, but from the leaders of one of the

biggest and most respected Communist Parties, a Party which led a glorious and triumphant revolution and is building the foundations of socialism in a country of crucial world importance. It is precisely for this reason that the present dispute is so dangerous. Already it has undermined the fraternal solidarity of the socialist countries. It is poisoning relations between Communists, whose comradeship, hallowed by the blood of countless heroic martyrs of our cause, is closer than that of brothers and sisters. Everything must be done, by all Communists and anti-imperialists, to call a halt to this sterile and destructive dispute before it deepens into a complete break, a factional split whose bitterness, as experience has taught us, may take many years to heal.

We should have no doubts about the character of this dispute and the direction which it is taking. It is the direction of factionalism.

Internal disagreement and debate, as we have seen in this short and far from complete survey, have always characterized the development of the working class movement. There is nothing alarming and unhealthy about this phenomenon. Provided the debate is serious and principled, it can only be educational, the clash of opinion serving to sharpen and clarify our ideas. But once a disagreement takes on a factional character the real issues at stake become incredibly oversimplified, crude and false. Distortion and misrepresentation replace the give-and-take of reasoned argument. The object is no longer to prove one's opponent to be mistaken, but to depict him as an enemy to be destroyed. Irreparable harm follows. Dear comrades-in-arms are suddenly 'transformed' into traitors and spies. Leaders of rival factions are depicted either as enemy agents or as infallible super-men, demi-gods. Factionalism in a revolutionary movement is like a cancer. Unless it is checked in its early stages, it spreads uncontrollably in a healthy organism until nothing will cure it but a surgical operation.

Such were the Bakuninist and Trotskyite faction fights in the time of the First and Third Internationals. We can and must act now to see that the same thing does not happen again on a far more serious scale. For there is nothing 'inevitable' in this process. We Communists have a hundred years' experience behind us of international organization and international solidarity. We have learnt enough to know that, whatever the provocation, we must not yield to the temptation of a majority to react to a faction by organizing a faction of its own. Remembering our responsibilities we must not react to mudslinging by mudslinging, but maintain all discussions on a high level of principle. We must not reply to intrigue by counter-intrigue, by witch-hunts for 'deviationists', but uphold the procedures of democratic discussion. We must not respond to attacks on our leaders by making a fetish

of their personalities. And we must strive unceasingly for the restoration and strengthening of the most complete unity of the international Communist movement. The will of the millions of Communists everywhere for unity is a mighty force which no Party and no leader, however eminent, can ignore. That is why every one of us, from the most senior leader of the biggest Party to the humblest rank-and-filer or supporter of the smallest, has a solemn duty to fight factionalism and prevent this cancer from growing.

If this centenary of the First International means anything to us Communists other than the formal celebration of an interesting date, it must mean that we learn from the past, that we remind ourselves not only of the tremendous advances we have made (though these are indeed the most striking and important feature of our celebration), but also of the avoidable setbacks we have suffered, so that our future advances will be the more swift and certain, in the interests of the hundreds of millions of our fellow-men who look to us for wise and victorious leadership.

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## **OTTO KUUSINEN** **1881-1964**

The danger which threatened the communist parties from within was an unfounded 'hunt for Right-wingers', i.e. for leaders who in the eyes of impatient Left-wingers seemed to be centrists or semi-centrists. Lenin pointed to the example of Radek's article published in the central organ of the German Communist Party in which, without any substantiation, such a respected revolutionary as Clara Zetkin, who for decades fought against the opportunist leaders of German social democracy, was accused of opportunism. That is why Lenin in his letter (to the German Communists in 1921) stressed the demand which was especially important for further work: 'Enough of internal Party struggle! Down with everyone who wants to continue it either directly or indirectly.'

**Otto Kuusinen**

(Comrade Otto Kuusinen, colleague of Lenin and veteran workers' leader in his native Finland and in the international Communist movement, died on May 7, 1964. He had been for many years, and was at the time of his death, a foremost member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.)