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THREEPENCE

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EDITORIAL

Dictatorship, Democracy and the United Front

THE Labour Party, Trades Union Congress General Council and the Co-operative Party have refused the offer of a united front by the Communist Party. The Independent Labour Party has accepted the united front and the first steps towards carrying it into action have been made.

Not content with refusing unity of the working class against fascism, starvation and war, and thereby exposing themselves as disrupters of the Labour Movement, as accomplices of capitalist terror, the National Joint Council of the Labour Party and T.U.C. have issued a manifesto of "justification" in the guise of "British Labour's call to the people." The manifesto is an attempt to cover up the Labour Party's refusal to fight against fascism by a denunciation of "dictatorship" whether from "right or left" and an affirmation in the virtue of "democracy" to bring about socialism "peacefully." The manifesto ignores the fact that the Labour Party and T.U.C. were not asked to renounce faith in "democracy" or any other of their political principles, they were simply asked to join in certain concrete immediate tasks for the defence of the working class, now faced by a tremendous crisis in its struggle against capitalism.

The argument of the manifesto is that "revolutionary" action by the workers leads inevitably to "reaction" and that therefore the only possible hope for the working class lies in peaceful submission to the conditions of capitalist "democracy," even though those conditions imply unemployment, hunger, wage cuts and war, even though they imply, as exists in this country and as existed in Germany till Hitler seized power, a "legal" terror against the working class. The argument is contained in the following paragraphs:

> "The follies and furies of Tsarism led straight to Communist dictatorship in Russia. The Communist dictatorship in Hungary was the pretext for the dictatorship of Horthy. Italian dictatorship tries to defend itself by saying that it saved Italy from Bolshevism.
>
> "The war, the reparations policy of the Allies, and the occupation of the Ruhr have created economic and psychological conditions favourable to aggressive nationalism and the growth of Communism in Germany, and finally to the triumph of the Hitler dictatorship."

The implication that there is no difference between the socialist dictatorship of the Russian workers and the counter-revolutionary terror in Hungary, Italy and Germany is obvious. It will not fail to be made use of by the most reactionary sections of British capitalism now busily preparing to support Japan in a war against the Soviet Union. It only confirms what the Communist Party has emphasised ever since the Leeds Congress in 1929, that the gap between the upper sections of monopoly capitalism and the reformist bureaucracy grows less and less, that fascism

and social-fascism, though not identical, are neighbours, as Comrade Stalin has put it.

What are the facts of the revolutionary crisis which took place at the end of the imperialist war, from which the Labour Party draws the moral that revolutionary struggle leads to inevitable " reaction "? First, we must once more emphasise the unforgettable fact that the division of the labour movement to-day and the continued existence of world imperialism, which supports its rotting carcase at the expense of the agony of millions of toilers in the imperialist countries and colonies, *is due first, last and before everything to the treachery of the leaders of the Second International in* 1914. The betrayal of the working class in 1914 by Mensheviks in Russia, Social-Democrats in Austria and Germany, Labour Party in England, Socialists in France, their support of the robber war, their work as the recruiting sergeants of imperialism during the war and as the butchers of the workers in the revolutionary crisis at the end of the war, is the real cause of the triumph of fascism and counter-revolution in every country except the former empire of the Tsar.

Lenin expressed this in burning words in his speech on the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg:

> " The bourgeoisie and social-traitors are rejoicing in Berlin to-day—they have succeeded in murdering Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Ebert and Scheidemann, who for four years drove the workers to the slaughter for the sake of the robber interests, have now assumed the role of executioners of the proletarian leaders. We are convinced from the example of the German revolution that " democracy " is only the covering for bourgeois robbery and the most savage violence.
>
> " Death to the executioners! "

Now let us examine the " history " of the Labour manifesto. " The follies and furies of Tsarism led straight to Communist dictatorship in Russia." Lie number one. They did not lead " straight to Communist dictatorship." The overthrow of the Tsar and his feudal-landlord clique led " straight " to the " Socialist " government of Kerensky, with its belief in " pure democracy," in " co-operation " with capitalism. Kerensky had, and still has, the support of the leaders of the Labour Party. With the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks Kerensky supported the imperialist aims of Russian landlord-capitalism in the war, prevented the solution of the agrarian problem in the Russian countryside, supported the Russian factory-owners against the Russian workers. Kerensky, in the name of " pure democracy," intrigued with Tsarist reaction in the shape of Generals Kaledin and Kornilov, and again with the support of the Russian " Socialists " suppressed the Communist Party and its press, arresting its leaders, in July and August of 1917.

The revolution of November, 1917, took place not against the Tsar, already settled with in February, but against the " Socialist " Kerensky

and his Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary supporters who in the name of " democracy " had formed the last hope of the Russian landlord and capitalist. In the name of the working class and poor peasant masses, the Communist Party, representing the overwhelming majority of the people, representing Soviet democracy, drove them into oblivion. Russian " democracy " flourished from now on only under the bayonets of allied intervention.

" The Communist Dictatorship in Hungary was the pretext for the dictatorship of Horthy." Lie number two. The Labour Party leaders should know, firstly: that the revolutionary Government of Bela Kun came to power " peacefully," that is without any violent revolution and in accordance with all the rules of " constitutional " government. Secondly, that Bela Kun's government was not purely Communist, but a coalition with the Hungarian Social-Democrats, who from beginning to end of the revolution did their best to sabotage its work. Thirdly, that the only " crime " of this majority government was that, against the wishes of the social-democrats who took part in it, it introduced Socialism into Hungary. Fourthly, that the Hungarian Soviet Government was overthrown by foreign intervention, including British, and that the " democratic " Socialist Parties of the Second International, including the British Labour Party, refused to raise a finger to support it when the Communist International in 1919 called for international action to help the Hungarian revolution. We should not, of course, gloss over the fact that events proved that Bela Kun and the Hungarian Communists made a fatal mistake in not splitting decisively from the Hungarian social-democrats.

" Italian dictatorship tries to defend itself by saying that it saved Italy from Bolshevism." And the Labour Party, by approvingly repeating this stale lie, shows that it considers Mussolini justified in thus " saving " Italy from " Bolshevism." But what are the facts? The Italian Socialist Party, under the leader of the Centrist Serrati, refused to split away from their reformist wing in 1920 and form a Communist Party. The seizure of the factories in 1920 took place under the leadership of a united Socialist Party who betrayed the Italian workers and land labourers by refusing to develop the seizure of the factories and estates into a Socialist revolution. Until this betrayal of the workers by Italian reformism, Mussolini and fascism were impotent and powerless. The Italian Communist Party, only formed in 1921, did not have the chance to overcome these tragic mistakes, but nevertheless in 1922 was the only Party to organise resistance to the " march on Rome " and has alone since carried on the fight against fascism *inside Italy*.

With reference to Germany, Lenin's comment on the murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht is sufficient answer to the Labour Party leaders, blood brothers of the murderers. We would only add that the Versailles Treaty was the work of the Labour Party as much as of the other imperialist parties, that two Labour Governments did nothing to revise or abolish it, and that the first Labour Government, which fostered

the Dawes Plan, was the father of the reparations policy of the Allies from 1923 onwards.

So much for the " historical " foundation of this manifesto. What can be said of its theoretical justification of " democracy " as opposed to " dictatorship "? The game is given away almost at once. " The reaction of the upper classes throughout Europe has strengthened the demand for the dictatorship of the working class." With the naïve blandness one associates with the most blatant forms of roguery the Labour Party exposes its secret. The failure of social-democracy in every country in the world to bring anything but misery and suffering to the masses, the brilliant victories of workers' dictatorship in the Soviet Union, the disillusion of millions of social-democratic workers in their leaders and the growth of mass Communist Parties in almost every country, this is what the manifesto refers to, this is the meaning of this last desperate attempt to save the discredited face of the Labour Party.

The aim of the manifesto is to conceal, in the interests of the class rule of British imperialism, the class nature of British parliamentary democracy, the real dictatorship of monopoly capitalism exercised in turn by Tory, Labour, and National Governments. The workers of Britain, in the past more deeply corrupted by democratic and parliamentary illusions than those of other countries, are rapidly becoming aware of this. The arrest and imprisonment of the Communist leaders in 1925, the General Strike, during which the Government openly acted as the mailed fist of the capitalists, the Trade Union Act, the Meerut atrocity and the whole record of British rule in India, the Means Test, the police terror and the preventive arrests of Tom Mann and others, are all stages in this education. The fact that the " democratic " Labour Government itself violated the secrecy of the post and the telephone (even in Hitler's Germany this has caused something of a scandal) and introduced spies and provocateurs into workers' organisations cannot be sufficiently emphasised.

What are the facts? In 1914-18 bourgeois democracy was declared bankrupt in the eyes of the world, of this bankruptcy even honest Liberals were aware and openly wrote. But in order to save capitalism it was necessary to replace the fig-leaf over the naked reality of bloody dictatorship. This modest task was performed by the heroes of the Second International, in this country by the leaders of the Labour Party and I.L.P. in particular. The whole policy of the Labour Party, which in 1914 wished the workers to spill their blood in the name of " democracy " for the enrichment of the little group of robber exploiters who are the real power in this country, has been to try and re-establish the workers' shaken faith in the divine right of that group of robbers to rule and exploit them in the name of " democracy." The two Labour Governments, far from bringing any enlarging even of the capitalist limits of democracy, have strengthened the bureaucratic, military and dictatorial elements in the State, weakened the parliamentary and representative elements. They have confirmed the tendency of the modern

bourgeois State to develop into open terror, open dictatorship, into fascism.

What is the difference between bourgeois and proletarian democracy? Lenin states it in the theses adopted by the First Congress of the Communist International.

> "The dictatorship of the proletariat is so far identical with the dictatorship of other classes that it is caused by the necessity, as with every other dictatorship, of suppressing the violent resistance of the class which has lost political domination. The fundamental difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of other classes, the dictatorship of the landlords in the Middle Ages, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in all civilised capitalist countries, consists in the fact that the dictatorship of the landlords and bourgeoisie was through the violent suppression of the resistance of the immense majority of the population, namely, of the toilers. On the other hand, the dictatorship of the proletariat is the violent suppression of the resistance of the exploiters, that is of a negligible minority of the population, the landlords and capitalists.
>
> "From this, in turn, it follows that the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably bring with it not only a change in the forms and institutions of democracy, speaking generally, but exactly that kind of change in them which gives an enlarging of the real use of democracy by those formerly oppressed by capitalism, by the toiling classes, such as has never before been witnessed in the world."

It is precisely this that the Labour Party leaders, interested only in the preservation at all costs of capitalist domination, try to prevent the workers from seeing. Soviet democracy, which draws millions into direct ruling, control and administration, which abolishes the privileged bureaucracy so admired by the "democratic" Labour leaders, is democracy on an infinitely freer, higher stage than anything possible even in the most flourishing days of capitalism, such as the United States in the pioneer days of the '60's and '70's, or Australia and Canada in their early stages of development. This fact has already been noted by such confirmed Fabians as the Webbs, who have emphasised that Soviet democracy is a much higher state form than capitalist democracy.

The fact that parliamentary institutions, the traditional weapon of bourgeois dictatorship in its concealed form, have been swept away in the Soviet Union is sufficient for the Labour champions of "freedom" to insult the Soviet workers by calling them "reactionary" in distinction to such notorious "democrats" as the executive of the South Wales Miners' Federation, for example, who can freely defy the almost unanimous vote of their members. But what is the essence of parliamentarism which in the words of the manifesto "can establish a Socialist society so soon as the workers are sufficiently advanced in political wisdom" (100 years of parliamentary democracy has so far failed to teach them

" political wisdom ") " as to place their own movement in the seat of Government armed with all the powers of the democratic State."

Lenin answers neatly in " State and Revolution."

> " To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and oppress the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary-constitutional monarchies, but also in the most democratic republics.
>
> " But, if the question of the state is raised, if parliamentarism is to be regarded as one institution of the state, what then, from the point of view of the tasks of the proletariat in *this* realm, is to be the way out of parliamentarism? How can we do without it?
>
> " Again and again we must repeat: the teaching of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, has been so completely forgotten that any criticism of parliamentarism other than Anarchist, or reactionary is quite unintelligible to a present-day ' Social-Democrat ' (read present-day traitor to Socialism).
>
> " The way out of parliamentarism is to be found, of course, not in the abolition of the representative institutions and the elective principle, but in the conversion of the representative institutions from mere ' talking shops ' into working bodies. The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time."

Such working bodies are the Soviets, who have in the course of sixteen years of constructive work brilliantly vindicated the initiative and creative ability of the working class and poor peasantry when the state power is really in their hands for the forcible suppression of the exploiters.

The manifesto, with its pretence that the dictatorship of the working class is " minority rule " is a pitiful expression of the bankruptcy of official labour. It is at the same time something more, a clear and definite statement that social-democracy has not changed and will not change its essential character, that it prefers the united front with the bourgeoisie in defence of capitalism (in war-time called " defence of the motherland," in peace-time " class co-operation ") to the united front with the revolutionary workers in defence of the proletariat against war and capitalist terror. The German social-democrats, having sabotaged the fight against Hitler, now move smartly to the Brown Shirt word of command. In Austria the " left " social-democrats make empty gestures while the workers fight on the streets.

But the united front of the working class is growing and will grow, irresistibly and eventually victoriously. The workers are learning by bitter experience that only by the way of Lenin can the goal of Lenin be reached, that without revolutionary class organisation and the forcible overthrow of the capitalist state there can be no socialism, no real struggle against war.