

Chapter Three

The Declaration for the New International and the Problem of the Independent Labour Party: June - December 1933

Trotsky's writings during the summer of 1933 continued to try to provide to his supporters the theoretical explanations by which he hoped to enable them to respond to the changes which the victory of Hitler and the political collapse of the Communist International had produced, tracing these changes as they affected the Labour Movement of the world as well as the relations of the imperialist powers to each other and to the Soviet Union. The discussions among the British Trotskyists can be understood by reference to the succession of Trotsky's writings. (1)

The first step amounted to establishing that there had been a serious defeat in Germany, for the press of the Communist International was disposed at first to deny that there had been a defeat, or to evade the question, treating the events of March 1933 at worst as a passing incident and at best as a positive gain for the working-class. (2) The German Communist Party had collapsed without a fight and consequently, in Trotsky's opinion, could never offer itself again as a force capable of leading German workers to revolution. The second step, therefore, must be to recognise that the foundations for a new Communist party must be laid for Germany, within the general strategy of trying, as before, to regenerate the Communist International. The third step was to draw the conclusion from the success with which the apparatus of the Communist International was able to silence discussion of the events leading to the German debacle and of the policies of the Kremlin in that period. In Trotsky's opinion, the defence of the U. S. S. R. and of the social conquests of the October Revolution, already endangered before 1933 by the internal policies of the Soviet bureaucracy and by the blunders of the Communist International under its domination (the alliance with the "Lefts" on the General Council of the Trades Union Congress in Britain in 1925 - 27, the alliance with the Kuomintang in China in the same years and the defeats for the British and the Chinese workers to which, in his opinion, these policies contributed)

could no longer after summer 1933 be entrusted to the Soviet bureaucracy. He wrote in July 1933, under the title,

"It is necessary to build Communist Parties and an International anew."

Then, as the fourth step:

"In a number of countries more or less important left wings have already separated themselves from the Social-Democratic Parties... Such is the odd combination of historic conditions, in a certain sense 'unforeseen', which opens up new opportunities of activity and progress to the Bolshevik-Leninists. We must utilise them all the way." (3)

Trotsky therefore advised his political sympathisers in Britain to establish the best relation they could with the left-ward moving militants of the I. L. P. (See also Chapter Four), by joining the party in a body, perhaps leaving some of their members in the Communist Party if they still had a wide field of work there. His proposal went on:

Two lines of ...
"Today the revolutionary workers of the I. L. P. still hold on to their party. The perspective of joining a group of forty, the principles of which are little known to them, can by no means appeal to them. If within the next year they should grow disappointed with the I. L. P., they will go, not to you, but to the Stalinists, who will break these workers' necks." (4)

These developments can be traced through the journal, "The Red Flag" and the internal discussion materials of the group. For example, the third issue of "Red Flag", that for July 1933, carried as its principal article Trotsky's "Problems of the Soviet Regime" (5). The leading article in this issue, which is unsigned, took up critically an attack on the foreign policy of the Kremlin written by Brockway in "New Leader", June 17, 1933. In a style like that of the exiled Russian Mensheviks, Brockway presented the rulers of Russia as:

"putting the interests of Russia before the interests of the world working class."

He gave as one example the renewal by the Soviet Government of the commercial agreements and the non-aggression treaty between Russia and Germany (which dated back to the 1920s) a few weeks after the Nazi coup d'etat.

Brockway wrote:

"Communist policy contributed to Hitler's victory. For when Hitler triumphed, the first government to conclude a treaty with Hitler was the Soviet Government, when it signed the Berlin Treaty, which included a complete financial and economic agreement. Through this treaty, the Communist International has come out against a boycott by the international working-class; but this is the only possible way of bringing Hitlerism down by striking at it during its initial period of economic weakness."

The press of the Communist International tried to rebut these arguments by replying that the agreements were no more than an application of the Soviet Union's normal struggle for peace, that their signature showed how Hitler had been forced to acknowledge the growing might of the Soviet Union, and that the boycott of German goods, proposed by the Second International, was a "social-fascist" policy, which would strengthen Nazism by rallying the German workers round it. (6) The "Red Flag" argued that Brockway was wrong, and that the official writers of the Comintern could not deal adequately with his mistakes, because they were handicapped by the over-optimistic tone of Comintern propaganda and, therefore, deprived of the one good argument which the Kremlin had to use against Brockway.

This was that the Soviet action was necessary, since the Kremlin was having to negotiate from a position, not of strength but of weakness, due to the mistakes of the ruling Stalin faction which had contributed to the defeats of the working-class, not only in Germany, but in China.

The "Red Flag" adopted a recent argument by Trotsky that the situation had to be accepted as it was, as in the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk in 1918:

"It is impossible to withdraw at will from an unfavourable relationship of forces." (7)

Trotsky allowed that it remained true that the renewal of the treaties would strengthen Hitler's hand in Europe, but the "Red Flag" replied to Brockway:

"To put forward the idea of the U. S. S. R. breaking with Germany now after the crushing of the German workers and the weakening of the U. S. S. R., is to be guilty of adventurism of the worst kind."

It drew the further conclusion, however:

"All along the line, the fight must be prepared against this leadership (in the Communist International J. A.). We urge on all our comrades in the Communist Party and the I. L. P. the need to examine, criticise and define positions, in order to nail down responsibility and to prepare for a radical change in all spheres

of working class policy."

Brockway also criticised, in the same article of June 17, 1933, the refusal of the Soviet Government to return the Chinese Eastern Railway to China. There was a long historic background to the argument about the circumstances in which the Soviet Government could be expected to hand over its rights - which derived from Tsarist treaties - in the railway, which crosses Manchuria, to some governmental authority in China. Following the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925 - 27, Trotsky took the point of view, as against Brockway, that the unfavourable situation of the Soviet Union had to be accepted, regardless of who was to blame for it, and that:

"If today the Left Opposition were at the head of the Soviet State in its immediate practical actions it would have to start from the existing relationship of forces resulting from ten years of epigone Stalinist policy." (7)

The front page of the July 1933 issue of "Red Flag" also carried the first of a series of appeals for support for the demand that the Chinese Government release from prison the Chinese Communist Ch'en Tu-hsiu, whom it described as:

"an old revolutionary fighter and one of the founders of the Chinese Communist Party. During the 1925 - 27 period of growing nationalist struggle, Chen was political secretary of the Chinese Communist Party and in that capacity loyally carried out the policy of Stalin and Bukharin. In 1929 he came to the conclusion that the Left Opposition policy on the Chinese Revolution had been the correct one and aided in the unification of the existing Left groups in China into the Left Opposition..... It is typical of the present leaders of the Communist Party of Great Britain and of the International Labour Defence that not a word of protest has been raised on behalf of our comrade. The Communist press is silent when the worker arrested does not accept the present policy of Stalin."

There is also a short note about the expulsion from the Hackney Local of the Communist Party of a Trotskyist called Wally Graham, (8) and "Red Flag" is reported to be on sale now in nine shops, seven of them in London, one in Manchester and one, that run by Frank Maitland, in Edinburgh.

The fourth issue of "Red Flag", dated August, 1933, faces squarely the problem which the I. L. P. presented to the group. The main, front-page article is headlined:

"A United Communist Party? Some Remarks to Members of the I. L. P. "

"Many members of both parties, seeing the immediate advantages to be derived from organisational unity, are not concerning themselves with the political basis for unity. In order to lull any doubts that may have been engendered by past experiences, the C. P. officials make great efforts to convince the I. L. P. that unity will be achieved democratically... The basis for unity is to be 'the programme of the Communist International'.... although supposed to be held every two years, there has not been a World Congress for five years'... Plenums have been held, the only result of which has been to drive the Communist Parties still further along the road to catastrophe.... The May issue of the Bulletin of the Revolutionary Policy Committee contains an article which supports this slogan of the 'United Communist Party'. We gather from this article that the R. P. C. takes the curious view that the C. P. G. B. is weak, not because its policy has been wrong, but because it has wrongly applied the Comintern's policy." (23)

The article goes on to attack the R. P. C. in rather hostile language:

"This is a truly extraordinary argument and will not stand any close examination. We would ask the R. P. C. whether the 'united front from below', the theory of social-fascism, the building of Red Trade Unions, to mention only three aspects of Communist policy, originated with the C. P. G. B. or the Comintern?.... The revolutionary workers of the I. L. P. must fight for their organisation to declare itself openly on the main political questions of our time."..

Trotsky contributed to this, the fourth issue of "Red Flag", "The Left Opposition and the S. A. P.", (9), which "Red Flag" entitled "Trotsky On German Left Socialists."

There was also another, shorter piece by him headed, "On Zinoviev and Kamenev", (10), and another, longer appeal for the campaign to secure the release of Ch'en Tu-hsiu. The "Anti-Fascist Congress" at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on June 4 and 5 was reported under the head-line, "What Do They Fear? Gangster Methods at Anti-Fascist Congress", which detailed the attacks on supporters of the Left Opposition by the organisers, and which included an extract from the declaration of the Trotskyist delegates to the meeting, summarising their criticism of the "Third Period". (11)

The September 1933 issue of "Red Flag" (no. 5) appeared, like those before it, as

"organ of the British Section, International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-leninists)."

The discussion on Trotsky's proposal that the group should enter the I. L. P. was just starting.

The front-page article is entitled, "Towards New Revolutionary Advance", and is signed with the initial "G", presumably meaning Groves. It reads rather like a sermon calling on the members of the I.L.P. to renounce their centrist sins. (12). Trotsky contributed to this issue, "Fascism and Democratic Illusions", (13) which criticises the claim of the April 1933 Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Communist International: (14)

"The establishment of an open fascist dictatorship accelerates the tempo of the development of a proletarian revolution in Germany by destroying all democratic illusions of the masses and freeing them from the influence of the Social-Democracy".

Trotsky commented:

"The smashing of the Weimar democracy by Hitler can no more put an end to the democratic illusions of the masses than Goering's setting the Reichstag on fire can burn out Parliamentary cretinism".

The same issue addressed an "Open Letter" to the old militant, Tom Mann, appealing to him to support the campaign for the liberation of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, whom he had met when on a visit to China in 1927.

The most important article, apart from Trotsky's, in the September 1933 issue of "Red Flag", was "Recovery or Crash: British Economic Perspectives", signed with the initials T.F. (which the writer cannot attribute). The article reveals a development of independent political thinking, renouncing any "catastrophic" economic perspective of "ever-deepening crisis":

"The picture as a whole shows a substantial groundwork for the beginning of the transformation of the downward swing of the cycle into the upward, certainly to a sufficiently great extent to demand that the possibility of an upturn in the cycle be given an important place in any serious discussion of the economic perspective.....

"A revolutionary party should by this time have definitely in its perspective not only the possibility of an economic upswing, but the revolutionary potentialities that will inevitably accompany and be great out of all proportion to, such an upturn. Here in England, the National Government, and then the Labour Party along with the remnants of Liberalism, will be placed squarely on the rack of their most recent promises to the masses. Great strikes, with the possibility of shifting rapidly from the economic to the political, will be on the order of the day. Earnest preparations for the approaching period should be begun at once."

This article struck a new note. The Trotskyists, educated largely under the influence of Palme Dutt in the Communist Party, were now beginning to free themselves from the mechanical, Kautskyite prognoses

of over-deepening crisis which had been at the basis of the policies of the Communist International since the Fifth Congress in 1924 and which were influential among the Left in Britain in the early 1930's.

The last issue of "Red Flag" before the British Section divided on the question of entering the I. L. P. is No. 6, dated October - November 1933. For the first time it was subtitled, "Monthly Organ of the Communist League", but even so, the sub-title went on to describe the Communist League as "British Section, International Left Opposition". The front page, however, carried the "Joint Declaration for the New International" of the International Communist League, the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany, the Independent Socialist party of Holland and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland. (15). Page 2 carried Trotsky's, "Whither the I. L. P.?" (16) Page 3 carried Trotsky's "It is Impossible to Remain in the Same International with Stalin, Lozovsky and Co", head-lined here "On the Need for the New International: A Conversation". (17)

This issue also carried two minor but unquestionable "scoops". The first was a letter of support from Tom Mann for the campaign to get Ch'en Tu-hsiu out of prison. At the time Tom Mann was already elderly, but was still pretty solid timber. (18) His letter ended:

"I count it my duty to continue to develop opinion till it shall be equal to demanding and securing the release of our comrade", a declaration which can hardly have given much pleasure to the Communist Party. The other story was an attack on the "Amsterdam Anti-War United Front Committee" which was set up in Britain, under the secretaryship of John Strachey, after the Amsterdam Congress of August 1932. Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell had dissociated themselves from it. The short piece is entitled ironically "Anti-War Fighters". It quoted a statement by Einstein:

"I say frankly that if I were a Belgian I would not refuse military service in the present circumstances, but on the contrary would accept it with the feeling that I would be contributing to the salvation of European civilisation."

Bertrand Russell was quoted as having written:

"I severed my connection with the Anti-War Movement some time ago as soon as I discovered that it was a Communist body in disguise. This had been concealed from me at first by an impressive list of non-Communist names and by the title of the organisation, which, as I subsequently discovered, by no means correctly represented its aims."

The comment of "Red Flag" concluded:

"These defections should go a long way to enlighten all workers anxious to fight war; and the falsity of THIS type of United Front against War, under the guidance of the Comintern, so un-ably led by Stalin. Workers! Back to Lenin and his Methods!"

The National Committee of the British group met on July 6, 1933 and decided on:

"a committee of responsible comrades to develop and co-ordinate our work within the I. L. P. ; to draw together our contacts and sympathetic elements to work for the formation of a fraction within the I. L. P. ; to devote more space in our journals to the question and to issue special leaflets etc., and to seek every opportunity of entering into relations with the I. L. P. nationally and wherever we have groups locally." (19)

Broadsheets in the name of the British Section I. L. O. were produced for distribution to members of the I. L. P. and two examples have survived. One of these (20) takes up the proposal of the Communist Party for a "Unity Congress" rather along the same formal lines as the leader in the August "Red Flag". The other broadsheet reproduced the "Joint Declaration of Four for a New International".

Hugo Dewar, as Secretary, the Balham Group, I. L. O., B. L. s, wrote to the secretaries of I. L. P. branches in South-West London on July 11, suggesting that a monthly discussion be held, especially about Germany and the consequences of Hitler's victory, open to all members of Balham and Clapham I. L. P. and I. L. O. . . On July 25 the Hackney branch of the I. L. P. Guild of Youth wrote to the Hackney Group of the I. L. O. for a speaker. (21)

At about the same time, on July 25, Trotsky settled at St. Palais, a village near the watering-place of Royan on the Atlantic coast near the mouth of the river Garonne. There he could receive many visitors, especially Left Socialists, and was in a position to become better informed about the state of the Labour Movement in Britain. He developed the idea that the British Trotskyists should join the I. L. P. in a body and that when they did so they should declare that they would accept the discipline of the majority of the Party, (22) claiming only the right enjoyed by other tendencies, such as the Revolutionary Policy Committee (23) to put their views forward from a platform within the Party.

They were not to give their opponents the handle against them that they were trying to disrupt the I. L. P. or to "raid" it for the benefit of some other organisation. On the contrary, they were to join it in order to help it to counteract the destructive influences of the Communist Party and of the old opportunists who had accompanied it out of the Labour Party. They were to incorporate into its life the experiences of the first Congresses of the Communist International and of the International Left Opposition. In this way they would turn the I. L. P. back towards the main stream of the British working-class, the Labour Party, and would end its growing isolation, enabling its members to struggle more effectively against the reformist bureaucracy.

The first written evidence of this proposal is a letter from the International Secretariat enclosing an extract from the minutes of a Plenum of that body. Presumably this is the meeting to which the date August 19 is assigned by Trotsky (24).

The letter appears to have been drafted on August 21 and to have been amended by the Plenum and posted on or after August 23. The central passage reads:

"From your letters we know of your connection with the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and of your work in its midst. But all the information we receive on the internal situation in the I. L. P. makes us pose the question whether your organisation ought not to concentrate nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths - of its force on the work in the I. L. P. . . . You could and should enter the I. L. P. so as to lead it to the path of Bolshevism as well as to guard it from Stalinist machination: these two tasks co-incide with each other. Your work can be successful only under one condition; that you enter the I. L. P. not only to split this or that part from it but to help the party as a whole to become strengthened by cleansing itself from opportunist tendencies and foreign elements."

There was also, however, a post-script to this letter, which sounded a divergent note:

Put see part b 57
of the letter
at end
of the letter
at end
"P. S. To complete our proposals, we call your attention to the fact that your entrance into the I. L. P. implies absolutely the maintenance of your group and your press as independent organisations. For practical reasons this may mean that one or two comrades of the group will not join the I. L. P. and will be publicly responsible for the press and the activities of the English Bolshevik-Leninists."

No record has yet been recovered of the discussions at the Plenum of the International Secretariat which resulted in the letter which modified Trotsky's proposals, nor of the discussions between its

representative, Witte, and the Communist League in London, apart from Witte's own report. There is, therefore, no means of knowing its reasons for its decision. Perhaps the Plenum did not consider the possibility that the majority of the Communist League would reject entry into the I. L. P. "on principle" and that those who did not enter as faction workers, either staying in the Communist Party or occupying themselves with an independent press, might act in such a way as to compromise the work of the "entrists". Perhaps it may have hoped that the post-script would attenuate the resistance of the majority of the National Committee, which included its more experienced members, to tackling the I. L. P. from the inside. In any case, the National Committee greeted what it saw as the concession of the I. S. with scorn:

"While this proposal seems on the surface to be a modification of Comrade Trotsky's proposal, it actually at one blow destroys the main case put forward by L.T.... Trotsky advances as his main reason the fact that our separate existence creates barriers between ourselves and I. L. P. members. The I. S. proposes to keep these barriers in existence." (25)

A little later Trotsky developed more concretely in a series of letters to the British group the conditions in which he thought that some members might not enter the I. L. P... These nowhere admitted the possibility that an "outside" press or other activity should be maintained. (26) He criticised the formulation of the Plenum and his letter of September 3, 1933 repeated that entry had to be complete to be effective:

"The Secretariat has altered so much my proposition that they suggest to our English section - if my information is correct - that some comrades do not enter the I. L. P. in order to continue publishing the paper. This plan... seems to me of no use. The I. L. P., and what is to its credit, has expelled two members because they were also members of the C. P... The I. L. P. will also distrust us for the same reason. This distrust can only be overcome if your people get into the I. L. P. with a desire to influence the Party as a whole and to become powerful there, but not to work towards breaking away a small part from the whole party. The publication of a small monthly paper under the circumstances is senseless, because the same articles are published at the same time or earlier in the Militant...."

His next letter, dated September 16, 1933, develops his argument on this theme:

"It is worth entering the I. L. P. only if we can make our purpose to help the party, that is, its revolutionary majority, to transform itself into a truly Marxist party."

see also...
Difference in
working...
"Working..."
1933-34...
"Principled Communist"
via...
Bismarck...
working...
Wittke
1933-34...

He wrote again on October 2, 1933:

"...if you enter the I. L. P. to work for the Bolshevick transformation of the party (that is, of its revolutionary kernel), the workers will look upon you as fellow-workers, comrades and not as adversaries who want to split the party from outside... (Today the revolutionary workers of the I. L. P. still hold on to their party... Should all the members of your group enter the I. L. P? This is a purely practical question (if your members who work inside the Communist Party have a wide field for their activity, they can remain there longer, although I personally believe that the useful effects of their work would be, under the present circumstances, a few times greater in the I. L. P)... " (27)

Towards the end of August Trotsky wrote to James P. Cannon to ask that the Communist League of America help the British group. He suggested publishing appropriate articles in the Militant for distribution to members of the I. L. P. and that the British group should be given copies of his "Critique of the Draft Programme of the Comintern", with its discussion of the difference between an international communist programme and one based on "Socialism in a Single Country." (28)

Witte produced a written report of some length on his meetings in London with members of the British group and with some of the leaders of the I. L. P... Some parts of the report are unique sources of information. Witte wrote, for example:

"I was able to attend meetings of two groups (Balham and Hackney). The impression that I got was that these groups carry on quite a remarkable activity among workers' organisations, in the trade union movement of their districts, and in other movements of united front (against war, fascism, unemployment etc.,) It seems that their influence among workers in general and within various political organisations (Communist Party, I. L. P., Labour Party) is very wide and far surpasses their numerical forces. Their literature is widely distributed. Often they are represented as a tendency in united front action. In the Balham Group, among others has taken place a discussion on their activity in the unemployed movement in which almost all members participated and which brought out a very remarkable level of the members. They make a good division of work and participate very actively in all fields of activity of the workers' movement of their district. One Comrade of the Hackney Group, for example, is president of a local committee of the anti-war movement. The same group has obtained a common platform with the I. L. P. in a park in its district. An example of the of the activity and of the influence of the organisation is that this group, which is in existence six months and has six members, of whom three have come from the I. L. P. sold in July 220 copies of their paper. The majority of the comrades are between 20 - 35 years of age. Among their members are a

number of active women.....

"The members of the Opposition are today 40. They have hardly lost a member since the formation of the organisation. Ten comrades are members of the Party. They expect to have their Conference in six months. They are busy preparing a platform. They have not yet formed groups in the provinces. They have contacts in Liverpool, in Glasgow, and through the sale of the paper in other cities, but through lack of funds have not the opportunity to travel in the provinces to lay the basis for organised work.

"Of the seven members of the leadership, five are workers and two are intellectuals. Among these, as well as in the organisation, are politically qualified comrades. Their paper has a sale of nearly 1,000 copies. Besides their paper, there appears "The Communist" mimeographed, and recently their internal Bulletin with great regularity."

Witte reported that the leadership regarded the I. L. P. as a petty bourgeois and compromised organisation in a state of decomposition: in their opinion, entry would disrupt their current work and oblige them to support in public the policies of the leadership. He gives the impression of having counter-posed a more optimistic forecast:

"If one supposes that the majority of the I. L. P. turn towards us, the L.O. would become in reality the political leadership of the I. L. P.... If the wing that sympathises with us remains a minority, the L.O. will become the centre round which will crystallise an entire current."

His report also conveys the impression that the British group's leadership thought that the I. S. had not kept them fully enough informed of the development of its point of view and that they suspected the I. S. of dealing with the I. L. P. over their heads. It also includes an assessment of the attitude of the leaders of the I. L. P. to the Trotskyists, with an account of conversations with Brockway and Paton. (These are discussed later in the chapter on the I. L. P.)(29)

The "majority" which, in general, rejected the suggestion that the group should give up its "independent" organisational existence, and the "minority" which, in general, supported the proposal of Trotsky, have left detailed records of their arguments in the discussion bulletins of the Communist League. These arguments have frequently been repeated in the experience of Trotskyist groups in Britain, and not only there. They are about important political questions which affect not only the lives and work of the members but the activity of those whom they influenced. They should, perhaps, be understood

as too important to be dismissed as "mere in-fighting", even though at any particular time only a small number of people may be involved in discussing them.

The "majority" tended to conduct the debate at the level of practical considerations. Their arguments may be summarised as follows:

1. Trotsky exaggerated the size of the I. L. P. and the potential for revolution of its members:
2. The National Committee had already devoted attention to them and proposed to devote more:
3. They were not, as Trotsky suggested, restrained by fear of the "malicious criticism" of the Stalinists.
4. If they discontinued "Red Flag", they would lose contact with people who were "outside the I. L. P., often for sound political reasons." Relying on the Militant "would in no way compensate us for the loss of our organ..."
5. Twenty-five per cent of the members were in the Communist Party and it would be by no means as easy to transfer them to the I. L. P. as Trotsky made it sound.

Among those who "often for sound political reasons" would not join the I. L. P. or understand the Trotskyists if they did so, was one tendency which was discovered some eighteen months later to be interested in "Red Flag" and "New International" as sources from which to pick arguments with which to attack the Communist Party and which had no intention of trying to construct a new revolutionary party or a new International, because they were supporters of De Leon. These were the associates, in Glasgow, of Hugh Morrison. (30) Nor did the "majority" explore the suggestion that they might develop an International Bulletin in collaboration with the International Secretariat to develop their work in the I. L. P... They replied...

"The suggestion that the International Bulletin would be of help is meaningless. Apart from the fact that it is now over three months since this organ has appeared, the fact that it is duplicated, and very badly, and in French, would make it entirely useless."

They argued, further, that their entry could at most mean influence and possibly control in three or four branches in the London area, while the very fact that they preceded their entry with a public declaration of their purpose would keep alive the very suspicions which Trotsky said would be lulled by entry. They stated, however,

that actually they did not regard the situation in the I. L. P. as one which would be resolved, as Trotsky saw it, within such a short time as a few months.

The "minority", which appears to have consisted especially of younger people who had spent less time in the Communist Party than the leaders of the "majority", perhaps had not been trained to regard the I. L. P. with such contempt and could recognise more clearly the processes at work within it. In opening their case they claimed:

"Objections to L. T.'s proposals based on fundamentally revolutionary principles have not yet been raised. Should such objections be raised, we are prepared to meet them."

The "minority" itself then discussed a series of secondary, "practical" questions before attacking at the heart of the majority's position. This point was reached when they challenged the "majority" to deny that its perspective, though not declared, really meant that the group with its forty or fifty members -- was to act more and more as if it were an independent party. The "minority" demolished this perspective as un-realistic and as wrong on theoretical grounds, basing itself on the arguments of Lenin in "Left-Wing Communism". Even at this, the highest theoretical level which the discussion reached, the "minority" was not yet able to develop further the argument to the point which it was to reach in 1936, that an intervention should be prepared in the Labour Party, and in 1933 the point was not yet raised that the entry into the I. L. P. could be an effective step towards mobilising a force to join the revival inside the Labour Party which was enjoying a series of impressive electoral victories and where a developing anti-war sentiment and movement to the Left was expressed in the Socialist League.

In autumn 1933 it argued that if any were to enter the I. L. P. there was no point in not sending in all. The group was so small that to keep enough members outside to run an independent press and a public "party" would reduce the number of entrists so low that they would make little impression.

They were more impressed than the "majority" by the theoretical strength of Trotsky's argument, but they did not yet know enough

about the I. L. P. to understand that their work for the Fourth International in the I. L. P. would raise arguments about every important question of politics. They tended to assume that the struggle in the I. L. P. would be a straight fight between the 'growing forces of the Fourth International and Stalinism in continuous decline. They might well claim the right to optimism, because the Communist International was fresh from a smashing international defeat, while the Trotskyists had just laid the foundation for the new international with the "Declaration of Four". The "Marxist Group in the I. L. P.", into which the entrust "Minority" developed in 1934, made the Stalinists their main target, while Brockway was able to maintain the illusion, against which the Trotskyists battled without great success, that one day a new international might emerge from his efforts to re-unite the Second and the Third Internationals, and that in the meantime his work to stitch together the disparate groups which became the "London Bureau" was a realistic "alternative" to the Fourth International. (30) Nor could the "minority" foresee the paradox that the destruction of the Communist Party of Germany by the Nazis, and the inability of the Communist International to correct its course, were to open a period in which, temporarily, the influence of the Communist Party of Great Britain was to rise to greater heights than ever before.

To the question of the "majority":

"And if we fail to win the I. L. P. as a party to a Revolutionary point of view?.....",

the "minority" replied:

1. Can a party of forty or fifty (or double, or even ten times that) expect to establish or, if established, to accomplish much by a united front with a party that can count its members in thousands?
2. To dismiss the I. L. P. as a party quite hopeless from the revolutionary point of view, refusing even to submit the question to test in practice: does not such an attitude seem more likely to have come from seeing the I. L. P. through the eyes of Stalinism (the creators of the theory of social-fascism)?....
3. "There is a practical certainty, again provided that the correct tactics are applied, and applied SOON, that at least the best portion of the working-class elements in the I. L. P. can be

saved from the Stalinists or political indifference, and be drawn to a Leninist platform."

In the light of the evidence, a comment has to be made on the statement in which Mr. Harry Wicks has summed up the discussion:

"At the end of 1933, the International Secretariat of the Left Opposition proposed that we should liquidate the organisation and enter the I.L.P. to win them over to the Fourth International. After a thorough-going discussion this view was rejected by a substantial majority, whereupon the minority entered the I.L.P...." (31)

More precisely, the initiative came from Trotsky and was modified by the International Secretariat. It was made, not at the end of 1933, but during the late summer of that year. The proposal was not that the group be liquidated, but that it cease to exist as an organisationally separate and independent body appealing to the public in its own name, while continuing to exist inside the I.L.P., like the R.P.C., as a faction.

By autumn 1933 the British group had developed a functioning leading committee, three branches and regular members' meetings. In addition to selling their paper, their theoretical journal and their pamphlets, the members attempted a new venture:

"A year ago a number of comrades in London organised the sending of press excerpts and summaries to Leon Trotsky. This work continues, Cde. Trotsky indicating from time to time the nature of the material his work requires. In order to make these materials more generally available, and to help to meet the costs, these excerpts and summaries are now being hectographed in the form of FOR DISCUSSION, and issued once a month in numbers containing 15 - 20 pages." (32)

Hugo Dewar reported as follows, as Business Manager of "Red Flag", on the first three issues: (33)

	May	June	July
Sales (copies)	913	965	1244
Receipts	£3. 6. 9½	£3. 18. 9½	£4. 3. 7.
Guarantee Fund	£ 1.14.6.	£3. 18.8.	£4. 1.11.
Sales (London)	662	699	701
(outside			
London)	351*	366*	543

* these are the figures given in the original source, "For Discussion", No. 12, but they clearly contain misprints or arithmetical errors.

There are other indications of the activity of the members and of their interest in local affairs. In July 1933 they published as a hectographed pamphlet Trotsky's speech of February 15, 1926, "Europe and America", (price 3d.), another contribution to a worldwide strategic view of the tasks of revolutionary Marxists. In the same period they also issued a declaration against the nationalist and chauvinistic tone of an article in the monthly paper of the local Labour Party, the "Balham and Tooting Citizen", entitled "British people want Britain for the British". Their leaflet, issued in the name of "The Balham Group, Communist League", replied:

"It is exactly the kind of slogan likely to play upon the prejudices against which the workers' movement has fought for years, the patriotic drum-beating that enabled the National Government to go back with such a majority at the last election. Hitler is engaged in murdering and persecuting thousands of Jewish workers under the slogan 'Germany for the Germans'.... The Labour movement has always been international.... The workers of other countries speak different languages but they fight the same battle as we do, against the same enemy... Effective international organisation is stopped by the separation of the world into national groups, a political division kept alive to further the interests of the profit-makers.... The younger generation, which missed the experience of the war, grows up surrounded by the propaganda of fascism... We must say to them, "Not Britain for the British", but "The world for the workers". (34)

Some members of the British group were already in the I. L. P. and a few had been there even before they joined the Left Opposition. Harber, Margaret Johns and others, on the contrary, had entered the I. L. P. only in 1933, having joined the Left Opposition first. The leadership convened a meeting, in a letter dated October 18, (35) to open the discussion on the matters which the Trotskyists in the I. L. P. were to raise there in preparation for the next Annual Conference, to be held at York at Easter 1934. A second letter on the same subject named Harber, another man and Margaret Johns and followed up the proposals of the earlier letter in greater detail. Neither letter, however, produced a response, and on November 8 Dewar wrote again to members of the I. L. P. fraction convening a

meeting (36), with the remark, "So far no material has been received."

Shortly afterwards those who supported the viewpoint of the minority formed a committee, which met in December, before the decisive aggregate meeting of the whole membership at which the question of the I. L. P. entry was to be settled. The minutes of this committee meeting record:

"If their resolution (i. e. the line of the majority) is carried - Cde. Harber to state that we are determined to enter the I. L. P. on our own responsibility (reading I. S. letter if necessary) all compromise to be rejected." (37)

The Central London branch of the Communist League adopted the following statement supporting the "minority": (38)

1. That at most the I. L. P. as a party, and at least a considerable section of the I. L. P. can be won for Leninist principles.
2. That the winning of the I. L. P. is the paramount need at the moment, to which all the activities of all the Bolsheviki-Leninists in this country should be focussed.
3. That the logical and practical method of winning the I. L. P. is for the present members of the L. O. to become members of the I. L. P. . . .
4. That this effort to win the I. L. P. is incompatible with the continued existence of a separate, independent L. O. organisation in Britain under present political conditions.
5. That no organisational or personal difficulties of members in the existing British L. O. should be allowed to obstruct these comrades in securing and maintaining I. L. P. membership.
6. That in this question time is a vitally important factor, demand that the National Committee commence negotiations with the I. L. P. at once.
7. That the above points indicate the road as far as British events are concerned to the formation of a Fourth International based upon revolutionary principle.

A little earlier the National Committee "Majority" had produced a "Report on the Work Done in Relation to the I. L. P.". (39)

This records:

"Branches addressed by C(ommunist) L(eague) speakers:

Clapham, Wimbledon, Chelsea, Holborn & Finsbury, Golders Green, Poplar, Hampstead, South Norwood, Islington, Willesden.

Members in the I.L.P.....Seven.

Sympathetic contacts in following branches: -Clapham, Balham, Streatham, Wimbledon, Kingston, Islington, Hackney, Golders Green, Nelson, Liverpool, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Paddington, South Norwood, Holborn & Finsbury, Hampstead, Huddersfield, Govan, Wood Green.

Red Flags sold by following branches: Clapham, Wimbledon, Kirkdale (Liverpool), Huddersfield, Govan, branch in Glasgow, branch in Liverpool, Hampstead, also sold at Socialist Bookshop headquarters of London Divisional Council.

At the members' meeting on December 17, 1933, the "majority" moved:

1. This meeting of members of the Communist League rejects the proposal of L.T. that we should liquidate the existing organisation, cease publication of our paper, and enter the I.L.P. as individuals.
2. It regards this proposal as an ineffective method of decisively influencing the best sections of the I.L.P....
3. It declares that the winning of the I.L.P. can be best achieved by maintaining our organisation and political identity and our paper.
4. By our work outside through joint discussions, speaking to branches, approaching the I.L.P. on definite questions, dealing with their problems in our paper, we can aid our fraction inside to play an active and effective part in the present discussions and at the same time influence active militants who are not at present members of the I.L.P...(40)

The "majority" resolution was carried by 26 votes to 11, the total of votes roughly confirming the estimates that the League had forty members.(41) Two days later the "majority" issued a statement denouncing the "minority" for refusing to accept the decision of the majority and aggregate. It offered the compromise that the "minority" should stay in the Communist League and work in the I.L.P. under its direction. It also asked the I.S. to circulate its statement of December 19, together with the letter of the I.S....(42)

The opinion of the International Secretariat was conveyed to it in a letter dated January 26, 1934, signed by Bauer, warning the British

section that:

Also see
copy to
the
writing
S. 44-48

"the I. L. P. question is not a 'specifically English question'... Our British comrades had no other experience but the experience of the British Communist Party. They should therefore listen the more attentively to the voice of other sections which work on a larger area and have gathered greater experience." (43)

When Trotsky was writing to Groves and his associates early in 1936, in response to an appeal from them to renew the contacts which had been weakened after the end of 1933, he remarked:

A good source for
this work
p 298

"I will not go here into the past, for I must admit that in the history of the split the former member of the I. S., Witte, who has long since left us, played a rather malignant role." (44)

The materials which have so far been studied do not bring out what may have been the "malignant role" of Witte in relation to the Communist League. He did not mis-represent the decision of the Plenum of August 1933, the post-script of whose letter confirms what the minutes of the Plenum show that it approved, that "one or two comrades of the group will not join the I. L. P.". Trotsky nowhere mentioned this possibility, but it was not invented by Witte. There was another wrong impression, which Trotsky later counter-acted. This was that the Plenum demanded that the British group accept its recommendations and would break off contact if it did not. On this point Trotsky's letters are no less explicit than that of the International Secretariat itself in reply to the enquiry from Groves:

See
de
Violation
of
p 308

"It is clear, of course, that I am far from the thought that the unanimous opinion of the plenum obligates you to submit to it silently. The plenum adopted, not a decision, but a proposal..." (45) and etc

(us) soft line
consider
p 308

"Of course the I. S. did not intend and could not intend to force you by a bare order to enter the I. L. P.. If you yourselves will not be convinced of the usefulness of such a step, your entry will be to no purpose." (46)

Possibly Witte mis-led either or both of the tendencies in the Communist League when he was in London late in August or early in September. However, he was not alone in failing to grasp the central point of Trotsky's proposal. The Plenum unanimously approved that "one or two comrades will not join the I. L. P.", in order to "be publicly responsible for the press and activities of the English Bolshevik-Leninists", and Trotsky was complaining shortly afterwards that "the Secretariat has altered so much of my proposition" that their plan "seems to me of no use". (47) In any case, there may be some significance in

How to influence
the I.L.P.
writing
p 308

the fact that both Witte, the representative of the I. S. who visited London, and Bauer, who signed the letter of August 21/23 on behalf of the I. S., were both to break from the International Communist League in a short time, and were both to find their way to Brockway's "London Bureau". In autumn 1933 Witte could not accept the new international orientation towards the "Left Socialist" organisations, while in autumn 1934 Bauer strongly opposed the proposal that the French Trotskyists should enter the S. F. I. O.

In any case, personal friction developed between the leaders of the "majority" and those of the "minority" when they could not resolve politically the disagreements, which were evidently about important political questions. Groves blamed the I. S. for the split. Twenty years later he wrote, in his obituary of Henry Sara: (48)

"A factionalism, largely imported into the movement by the world organisation of the Trotskyists, who retained many of the vices of Communist Parties without the numerical and financial resources of those parties - brought division and later led to the break-up of the original group. Friendships held together however and it was mostly members of that original group - all active still in the socialist cause - that gathered at Henry Sara's funeral."

At the level of national politics also the frustration generated in autumn 1933 contributed to difficulty in resolving, in 1936 and 1937, real problems about how to operate the tasks of entry work in the Labour Party between the Groves-Dewar-Wicks group and the Harber-Jackson-Van Gelderen group.

The British section of the International Left Opposition would in any case have had to discuss and to decide how its members were to work in the new conditions created by the victory of Hitler and the development of the "Left Socialist Parties" whether Trotsky had raised the question or not.

In conclusion, there was another, more general difficulty arising to confront the Trotskyists about the time when the discussions leading to the split were developing. This difficulty, which their own documents did not bring out, was that isolated parts of Trotsky's critique of Stalinism could be taken up, in garbled forms, by other opponents of the Communist International to whom he was hostile, for example,

Social-Democrats, who did not, of course, at the same time give publicity to his attacks on them. In the autumn of 1933, for example, "Plebs" carried an article by T. A. Jackson playing down the effects of the Nazi victory in Germany and suggesting that the K. P. D. was acting in illegality as effectively as the Bolsheviks under Tsarism. Arthur Woodburn replied sharply to Jackson's argument that the Nazi victory represented a gain for the working class because it brought the proletarian revolution nearer ("dissipated democratic illusions"). However, in his attack he drew heavily on quotations from Trotsky's "History of the Russian Revolution", which was selling well at the time, to support his arguments in favour of reformism and Parliamentarism, for arguments against Jackson. (49)

No less embarrassing was the answer of Herbert Morrison, at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in 1933, to Ellen Wilkinson's advocacy of a "United Front" of the Communist Party with the Labour Party. When the latter commended the energy and devotion of members of the Communist Party, Morrison replied that the division in the ranks of the workers in Germany had been deliberately created by the Communist International:

"Trotsky himself has criticised the Communist International for its handling of the situation and Trotsky is right and Miss Wilkinson is wrong." (50)

However superficial his argument might seem to anyone who knew what Trotsky's ideas really were, the argument of the Communist Party that "the Trotskyists play into the hands of the Right Wing" was re-inforced again by Morrison's speech at the Annual Conference of the Labour Party in 1937 against Cripps and Laski. Morrison again was opposing a motion to admit the Communist Party into the Labour Party, and used Trotsky as his authority for contending that the policy of the Communist Party in the period of the agitation for a Popular Front was to the right of that of the Labour Party. (51)

Publicity of this kind, which cost nothing to Woodburn or Morrison, was highly unwelcome and, indeed, compromising to the Trotskyists, whom it helped to isolate from the leftward moving workers whom they hoped to influence by making them appear to be in the same camp as the reformist defenders of the Labour Party leadership.

- (1) The articles through which the development of Trotsky's thought can be traced are:
- (i) The International Left Opposition: Its Tasks and Methods, in "Writings: 1932-33" p.48
 - (ii) The Collapse of the K.P.D. and the tasks of the Opposition do. p.189
 - (iii) The Left Socialist Organisations and our tasks do. p.274
 - (iv) It is necessary to build Communist Parties and an International anew do. p.304
 - (v) Whither the Independent Labour Party? "Writings: 1933-34" p.53
 - (vi) How to influence the I.L.P. do. p.70
 - (vii) The I.L.P. and the New International do. p.72
 - (viii) Principled Considerations on Entry do. p.84
 - (ix) The Lever of a Small Group do. p.125

This list is not, of course, exhaustive.

- (2) The press of the Communist International and of its components largely remained silent for the first few weeks after the tragic events in Germany of March 5, 1933, awaiting the pronouncement on them of the Kremlin. In the next period it tended to suggest that, if there had been a defeat at all it would not be a serious matter, and that what had happened would be all to the good in the long run.

Rundschau, the new name of the German-language periodical of the Communist International which replaced "International Press Correspondence" when it was transferred to Basle, expressed on April 1 the opinion:

"The momentary calm after the victory of Fascism is only a passing phenomenon...."

In the middle of April, Heckert, the leader of the K.P.D. (whose report the Presidium of the E.C.C.I. heard before resolving that the political line of the K.P.D. had been "completely correct") wrote in Rundschau:

"The talk about the German communists being defeated and politically dead is the gossip of philistines, of idiotic and ignorant people...."

However, the opening sentences of Palme Dutt's "Notes of the Month", in "Labour Monthly", April 1933 (p.211), which doubtless were written during March, frankly admitted:

"A critical situation faces the world working class. By the events in Germany the heaviest blow of the capitalist

reaction since the war has been struck."

Dutt's conclusions, none the less, were the same as those of the Comintern functionaries:

"The present events have dealt a shattering blow to all reformist legalist illusions and have awakened masses of workers to the desperate necessity of unity and struggle."

Rundschau wrote in the same terms on April 1:

"The open dictatorship of Fascism destroys all democratic illusions, frees the masses from the influence of the Social-Democratic Party and thus accelerates the speed of Germany's march towards the proletarian revolution."

"Communist International" (April 15, 1933) expressed the advantages to be gained from the events of March:

"The Hitler-Papen-Huguenberg fascist government hopes to stop the wheel of proletarian revolutionary history by the methods of savage terror, torture and shootings. The emergency law will cost the German proletariat big sacrifices. But this means that the revolutionary movement will develop and all the contradictions will increase still more."

These generalisations may have calmed the anxieties of supporters of the Communist Parties abroad, but at the same time they obscured the question whether there had been a defeat, from which would follow the next question, who was responsible, and the next after that, what was to be done. The protection of the authority of the chiefs of the Comintern led to confusing the minds of their followers about whether to prepare for a long period of patient reconstruction in which the very bases of working-class independence would be re-built - or to expect an early mass uprising.

- (3) "New Leader", January 22, 1932, some eighteen months earlier had reported:

"A parallel situation to that developing between the I.L.P. and the Labour Party in this country is developing between the 'Right' and the 'Left' Socialists on the Continent. In Germany the 'Left' Socialists have already left the Social-Democratic Party and have formed the Socialist Labour Party."

The article goes on to describe the maturing split in the Dutch Social-Democracy, from which the Independent Socialist Party, led by Peter Schmidt, was to emerge. See also: Braunthal, "History of the International", Vol II, p. 358 - 360, and Trotsky "Writings: 1932 - 33", p. 274 - 278.

- (4) "Writings: 1932 - 33", "The Lever of a Small Group", dated October 2, 1933, p. 125.

(5) "Writings: 1932 - 33", "The Degeneration of Theory and the Theory of Degeneration", dated April 29, 1933, p. 215

(6) Braunthal, "History of the International", Vol. II, p. 397 - 8, where he quotes from Rundschau, May 12, 1933, May 26, 1933 and January 22, 1934.

See Brockway in "New Leader", June 30, 1933, "Russia's Treaty with Germany" and Peter Schmidt in "New Leader", July 7, 1933 "A Workers' Boycott of Germany?". Brockway wrote in "New Leader", July 28, 1933, criticising Pollitt's statement that "boycott is not a class weapon of the workers", and that the Soviet offer "to sell this important strategic line (the Chinese Eastern Railway) has inevitably been interpreted by the Japanese militarists as a sign of Russian weakness, and if the sale is actually allowed to proceed it will be an encouragement to them to proceed with their designs".

(7) "Writings: 1932 - 33", "On the Foreign Policy of the Stalinist Bureaucracy", dated May 12, 1933, p. 232.

To the argument on the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway, there was a long historic background. The line was built originally under Tsarism, on the basis of concessions exacted from China. Its purpose was to provide a direct route, across the Chinese territory of Manchuria, to link the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok on the sea in Russian territory. After the Russian Revolution, on September 27, 1920, the Soviet Government formally re-iterated its earlier denunciation of all previous treaties between Russia and China and renounced all Tsarist annexations. The Sino-Soviet Treaty of 1924 pledged that the railway would be handed back to China as soon as a unified and democratic Chinese government existed and could ensure that the railway would not fall into the hands of foreign imperialists to be used for aggression on the Soviet Union, particularly Japan. Meanwhile, the railway was operated by Russians and policed by Soviet armed forces.

On March 25, 1926 Trotsky presented to the Political Bureau of the All-Russian Communist Party a general report entitled "Problems of Our Policy with respect to China and Japan", produced by a Commission of which he was chairman. The report included the proposal that the Soviet Government should renew its pledge of 1924 to hand over the railway in due course, and meanwhile, that it should demonstrate its intention to eliminate any trace of "great-power mannerisms", to reject any kind of military intervention and to sympathise with the struggle of the Chinese popular masses for a single independent government and for democracy. It should, therefore, extend the railway and through its organisation should generally improve transport in Manchuria, in collaboration with Chinese interests. It should adopt broad, cultural-political measures to prevent friction between the Soviet railway officials and the Chinese people, make the administration bi-lingual, train Chinese workers and set up cultural-educational institutes for them and for the settlements near the railway.

At that time the Politbureau postponed action on the pledge. In July 1929 Chinese forces under the command of a war-lord, the son of Chang Tso-Lin, seized the railway and held it until Soviet forces won it back in the November of the same year. Certain critics of Stalin, such as the dissident German Communist, Hugo Urbahns, some anarcho-syndicalists and some supporters of the Left Opposition, condemned the refusal of the Kremlin to surrender the railway as an act of imperialist aggression against China. Trotsky, however, strongly attacked this view. He argued that it called into question the duty of unconditional defence of the Soviet Union by the Left Opposition in the case of war, and that the retention of the railway was necessary for the defence of the Soviet Union in the circumstances, while to surrender it could only strengthen the imperialist enemies of the Soviet Union.

By 1932 the Chinese Government had lost control of Manchuria, except for the railway, to the Japanese armies, which governed the area through the puppet state of Manchukuo, and the Soviet Government again came under pressure to surrender the railway. Trotsky took again the point of view, against Brockway, that the unfavourable situation of the Soviet Union, regardless of who was to blame for it, had to be accepted, and that:

"If today the Left Opposition were at the head of the Soviet State, in its immediate practical actions it would have to start from the existing relationship of forces resulting from ten years of epigone Stalinist policy."

Negotiations for the sale to Manchukuo of Russia's interest in the railway began in 1933 and in 1934 an agreement was reached to transfer them for about \$70,000,000, one-third in cash and the remainder in kind. The transfer was completed in March 1935.

- (8) Wally Graham was a worker who interested himself in the Marxist League in 1931 and joined the Communist Party in 1932 in order to work for the Left Opposition there. In the internal discussion in the Communist League before the split at the end of 1933 he actively supported the "minority" and later joined the I. L. P. He worked in the "Marxist Group in the I. L. P." until 1935 and some time in that year appears to have ceased political activity. Nothing more is known of him. He was expelled from the Communist Party on May 23, 1933 for "anti-party" activities and for being a member of an "anti-party group". He distributed to his former fellow-members of the Communist Party a declaration, a copy of which survives in the archives of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. It reads:

"The majority of my comrades in the Hackney Local remain ignorant of the actual reasons for my political attitude and the expulsion order. For fourteen months I have worked inside the Communist Party to the best of my ability. My reasons for doing this were that I was concerned with building up the C. P. as the leadership of the workers in order to overthrow the capitalist system and to build socialism.

Knowing this, many comrades will ask, why should my activities become 'Anti-Party'?

The answer to this is that a thinking communist is not one who accepts orders without question; that is the discipline of the barrack square and not of a workers' party. . . I believed that the policy pursued by the Communist International was likely to injure the advance of the world revolution. . . . Who will now hold that the policy of the Party in Germany has not led to disaster?

As a communist it was my duty to raise the points in order to avoid disaster which policies threatened. That I was expelled for doing so after events had justified my protest shows that the party leaders are more concerned with their prestige than with the revolution. I was suspended the day before the C.I.'s manifesto on the united front appeared. . . Party democracy has disappeared, criticism is not allowed. . .

How does the leadership in Great Britain explain the fact that the turnover of the Party membership is tremendous, 2,500 join and 2,000 leave in a year. We are outside the unions and have little influence in the factories. These questions must be answered, and this can be done only by a genuine correction of past mistakes, with full democratic discussion within the Party, by comrades standing together against the bureaucracy and for the restoration of democracy within the Party".

For details of the "C.I. Manifesto", see Appendix to Chapter IV in which the "United Front" between the I.L.P. and the Communist Party is discussed.

- (9) "Writings: 1932 - 33", dated April 27, 1933, p.210
- (10) "Writings: 1932 - 33", dated May 23, 1933, p.242, where it is entitled, "Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulate again".
- (11) The official statement convening the proposed Anti-Fascist Congress (see "Daily Worker", March 7, 1933, for full text) was issued in the name of the "Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition of Germany", the "General Confederation of Labour" of Italy and the "Revolutionary Trade Union Opposition" of Poland. It was addressed, over the heads of leaderships of national organisations, to "all factories and local workers' organisations (revolutionary, reformist and Catholic Trade Unions, unemployed organisations, local organisations of the Communist and Socialist organisations, Workers' and Youth Sports Leagues, Anti-Fascist and peasant organisations) and all who are ready to fight for the cause of the toilers against Fascism".
The basis which it proposed for the united front and for participation in the Anti-Fascist Congress combined:
Physical Defence against Fascist attacks
A Demand for Insurance against Unemployment
Demands for Democratic Rights and for joint defence forces to protect workers' meetings.

Joint struggle of all the toilers against the robber tax policy and against mortgaging of peasants' farms on account of non-payment of taxes and debts...."

Joint struggle against all who hold back the fight against wage cuts.

The statement declared, on the one hand, "Every worker must now realise that Hitler's seizure of power in Germany is the result of the collaborationist policy of the Social Democracy" and, on the other hand, "the struggle against Fascism must now be advanced to the forefront as the most important task", though nowhere did it declare unequivocally whether there had really been a defeat or not.

The terms of this appeal are not quite consistent with those of the directive which the E.C.C.I. issued at about the same time to Communist Parties to appeal to Social Democratic organisations for joint action against Fascism on a basis of abstention from mutual criticism. Perhaps the two documents have to be seen as complementing each other, and the call for the Anti-Fascist Congress, issued in the name of subordinate and little-known organisations without directly committing the Kremlin itself, as a cautious attempt to restore the authority of the Communist International. The question of how far the Communist International should share with Social Democracy the responsibility for the victory of Nazism could not be indefinitely suppressed, with the exiles arriving in London, Paris and Prague and telling their stories, and the "Manchester Guardian" publishing the horrifying reports of its correspondent inside Germany. Hugh Thomas, the biographer of John Strachey, describes his subject's embarrassment at the methods by which the Communist Party of Great Britain was trying to handle this difficulty (see "John Strachey", by Hugh Thomas, p. 135):

"This problem (that of the attitude of the C. P. to non-Marxists) came up acutely during 1933 over the continuing temptations offered to the communists by the disintegration of the I. L. P. At this time the I. L. P. was in considerable difficulties, with many members drifting over to the communists. Brockway, the chairman and editor of the "New Leader", had made an effort to prevent this, suggesting that some of the blame for the seizure of power by the Nazis had to be attributed to the communists, thus inviting a vigorous attack from Pollitt under the headline, 'Brockway Goes Over to the Counter-Revolution'. This seemed to Strachey far-fetched and ineffective. To Dutt he wrote: 'The I. L. P. leaders, however politically illiterate they may be, are quite experienced, subtle and unscrupulous controversialists. I am particularly worried about the effects of the German experience. It is so damnably easy for the enemies of the party to put over the Brockway case of "the C. P. of Germany was to blame too".'

Another possibility, which does not seem to have occurred either to Strachey or to his biographer, is that Pollitt was making the best of a bad case by abusing the opponent's attorney, that the tracks of the E.C.C.I. had to be covered somehow and that an examination of the actual record of the K.P.D. would not do the C.P.G.B. much good.

Strachey's anxiety was not unfounded. However, the critics of the German Communist Party did not always make the best of their case. For example, one J. Brown wrote in the monthly "Journal" of the Amalgamated Engineering Union for July 1933 that Hitler's victory was caused by working-class disunity, for which the Communist Party was wholly to blame. This attempt to absolve Social Democracy supported the view of Walter Citrine that in Britain the Labour Party must stand for "democracy against dictatorship". It did not carry much conviction with people who knew that Social Democracy in Germany had supported the bourgeois parties in cutting unemployment benefits and in building cruisers, in the hope of preserving the Weimar constitution and as the "lesser evil" to Hitler, that Hitler had come to power constitutionally through the Weimar institutions and that, after March 1933, the Social-Democratic and trade union leaderships in Germany had made one concession after another to Hitler, without avail, in the forlorn hope that the Nazis would spare them (see Braunthal: "History of the International", Vol. II, p. 385)

"Mistakes and defects" in the work of the K.P.D. were, indeed admitted at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International - two years later. "International Press Correspondence", August 3, 1935, reports that in the discussion of the report of the E.C.C.I. presented by Wilhelm Pieck, one "Franz" contributed:

"The heavy guilt of social democracy for the victory of fascism over the German working class is proved by history. We must nevertheless state self-critically the mistakes and defects of the Communist Party of Germany, which prevented the Party from freeing the majority of the working class from reformism. The chief mistake was the lack of elasticity in the policy of the united front, schematically making no difference between the masses of the S.P.D. members and officials like Severing, Zorgiebel, etc., and the lack of work in the reformist trade unions and mass organisations...."

Such statements could be made in 1935 about the K.P.D. to sustain the myth that the "mistakes" of the K.P.D. had consisted of incorrectly applying the line of the E.C.C.I., and to justify the "turn" to alliances not only with social democrats but with bourgeois parties in "Popular Fronts". They have been more freely made in later years by those who wish to dissociate themselves from the "excesses" of Stalin.

The I.L.P. did, in fact, have a hand in the Congress. "New Leader" reports (April 14th, 1933):

"The Consultative Committee of the I.L.P. decided to reply to the invitation to participate in the International Anti-Fascist Conference by making it clear that the I.L.P. can only take part in such conferences when it is allowed the opportunity together with the national parties of the Left of other countries to participate effectively in the preparatory organisation".

"New Leader", May 19, 1933 reports that the National Council of the I.L.P. endorsed this statement, objecting to direct contact being made with lower bodies and the rank and file "with a view

to detaching them". However, the rift in the lute was mended and "New Leader" published (June 9, 1933) an uncritical, though rather naive account by someone whom revolutionary phraseology evidently impressed and who had little grasp of the political questions at issue.

Trotsky had taken up the appeal for the Congress in April 1933. His statement about it (see "Writings: 1932-33, p.173) advised the Congress to:

accept the proposals of the Second International for joint action; condemn in principle the formula of "united front only from below";

renounce in no case the right to criticise temporary allies; wind up "Red Trade Unions" and enter the reformist unions; renounce "the infamous competition with fascism" under the slogans of "national liberation" and "a people's revolution" for Germany;

renounce the theory of socialism in one country, "which nourishes petty bourgeois nationalist tendencies and weakens the working class in the struggle against fascism", and to mobilise the European proletariat against Versailles and anti-Versailles chauvinism under the banner of the Soviet United States of Europe;

discuss frankly the causes of the victory of German fascism and the ways to defend the working class of Austria, the next victim to be.

The Conference was reported at some length in three articles in the New York "Militant" for June 17, June 24 and July 1, 1933. The first reproduced from the Trotskyist German-language organ, Unser Wort, which described the conference as "an empty parade". The second (signed with the initials S.G.) was headlined: "Left Opposition Excluded at Anti-Fascist Congress". The Congress had been held after delays, postponement and changes of venue, and the Daladier Government had refused to allow it to be held except in a hall identified with the Communist Party. The scene had naturally been dominated by the "free lances", the Radical deputy, Bergery, the novelists André Gide, Victor Marguerite and Henri Barbusse, the professors Prenant and Nejedly etc. The French Communist Party kept well in the background, but all the same those in charge went to extreme lengths to ensure that the voice of the Left Opposition was not heard:

"It remained for a member of the Y.C.L. of France to take the floor for a presentation of the views of the Left Opposition. This was entirely unexpected and consternation reigned in the ranks of the bureaucracy. Before the young orator could conclude his remarks with a declaration of concrete proposals, put forward by the Left Opposition, the bureaucracy organised a monstrous noise throughout several parts of the hall to drown out his voice."

The third article remarked: "If the Congress was not held under Government protection, it played the game of the foreign policy of the Daladier Government". No Soviet workers' delegation was present. The report claimed that supporters of the Left Opposition carried mandates from workers' organisations in Spain, Belgium, Greece, Switzerland, Poland, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and France sufficient to qualify for a hundred delegates.

The organisers took their credentials from them but refused to issue cards admitting them to the hall. Trotskyists who did get in were isolated, prevented from speaking, beaten and thrown out, with such excessive zeal that others were so treated by mistake. "Révolution Proletarienne", July 10, 1933, reproduces a report on the Congress from "L'Ecole Emancipe" that the Trotskyists were prevented by physical force from taking part in the Congress. It records that a Balkan delegate protested against the Radical Bergery being allowed to speak when Trotskyists were not allowed to speak, and that he was beaten and thrown out. A young Socialist militant also was attacked, apparently for the same reason, and as a result his delegation walked out of the Congress.

There is no subsequent mention of this Congress of any importance in the literature, or of any activity to which it might have given rise.

- (12) More substantial extracts from this article are perhaps worth while here, to show what the group thought about the I.L.P. :

"... the key weakness of the I.L.P. is that it is a "Centrist" organisation, politically shapeless and lacking any clear political position on the problems confronting the revolutionary movement. . . . Standing in the middle they are subject to the pressure, from the right by the Reformist apparatus which has already cost them a considerable number of members, and from the left by the apparatus of the Communist Party with its daily press, its rigidity of line, its cast-iron formulations and its financial superiority. Resistance to this is only possible from those who stand clearly and firmly on the basis of Marxism. The recent declaration of the N.A.C. of the I.L.P. emphasised that the members must regard the I.L.P. as 'THE Party' . . . But what must be understood is that declarations will not make the I.L.P. THE Party any more than proclamations have given the Communist Party influence in this country. Neither declarations nor small tactical recipes can act as a substitute for a basic political line. . . A good example is the statement of Fenner Brockway in the 'New Leader' of August 18th which is described as 'A Policy for British Socialists'. Beginning with the usual description of the world crisis, the poverty in the midst of plenty, the effects of labour-saving machinery, the article goes on to point to the class ownership of industry and to the need for the dispossession of the ruling class by the workers. The workers are to win power, but how, which is the main question, does not emerge very clearly. A Socialist majority is spoken of here which, encountering the resistance of the bourgeoisie, is to rely upon the rank-and-file of the forces and upon action by the workers. What is meant by a Socialist majority? A Labour majority? Or an I.L.P. majority? Later the article says that 'we must also anticipate that before a Socialist majority can be obtained in Parliament the capitalist parties will destroy Parliamentary democracy by a policy which, however

constitutional in form, will be fascist in essence'. Here the essence of Fascism, which is the destruction of the whole system of bourgeois democracy is confused with the formal constitution of Parliament. The conclusion of the article is that the workers will need an instrument with which to carry through the struggle for power. The task of the I. L. P. is to provide that instrument; just that and nothing more!

And the instrument is to be the workers' council. To secure united action with a revolutionary Socialist purpose and to develop the united working-class instrument to carry out that purpose - is this not the authentic voice of Centrism? We do not question the desire of Fenner Brockway and his comrades to achieve a revolutionary policy. But this is burking the central question. Soviets arise under certain conditions but only under the leadership of a revolutionary party can they be effective instruments for the capture of power. This unity talk, this call for 'action', serves to hide the central question of revolutionary leadership.

In a number of countries since the war a revolutionary situation has been missed or become transformed into its opposite because of the lack of trained revolutionary leadership. Workers' Councils, or Soviets, cannot be the substitute for the revolutionary party. They can only be the instrument through which that Party wins the support of the majority of the working-class. And on this question of the leading revolutionary party, how it is to develop, and its perspectives, the I. L. P. reveals hopeless confusion. In one statement the I. L. P. is described as being the Party: in another it sets itself the task of securing an all-in united front and in another it speaks of unity with the Communist Party.

...in spite of the favourable conditions existing, in spite of the thousands of pounds spent every year in propaganda, the Communist Party today, has, at the most, three thousand active members. Many thousands of good proletarians have joined its ranks, only to pass out again and to sink into indifference and despair. The blows of capitalism and the treachery of the reformists compel many workers to the side of the Communist Party. They are dis-illusioned by their experience inside and having no theoretical standpoint they drift out again and sink into indifference.

Instead of training the future cadre of the revolution, the C.P.G.B. acts as an agency for the corruption of the best elements of the working class. Inside the Party there is, and there can be, no democracy. The members who stay in are taught not to think, to learn, to relate their theory, such as it is, to experience, not to fight for their opinion, not to translate those into flesh and blood but to repeat parrot-like the phrases of the "Daily Worker" and to operate the 'line' which, as the united front experience has shown, can be reversed twice within a few months without

the slightest murmur from the members."

The closing paragraph, which suggested what the I. L. P. members should do, was perhaps the weakest part of the article, however, because it did not suggest concrete actions in which they should engage:

"The I. L. P. can play a great part in this work, in the winning of the best workers and in the fight for a correct policy. Around the banner of Leninism have to be grouped the best revolutionary elements. On what basis? The first four congresses of the Comintern where the basic tasks of a Marxist party were laid down, together with the application of these principles to the experience of the last ten years. This will be found set out in the work of the Left Opposition, which has, over this period, maintained a Marxist standpoint and on the heaviest test of all, Germany, put forward all the way through the one correct policy that could have defeated Hitler and made possible the German workers' revolution. On this basis will be possible the grouping of the best revolutionary elements in Great Britain...."

- (13) "Writings: 1932 - 33", p. 295, where the piece is entitled, "Fascism and Democratic Slogans", and is dated July 14, 1933.
- (14) De Gras, "Documents of the Communist International", Vol. III. p. 245.
- (15) "Writings: 1933 - 34", "The Declaration of Four: On the Necessity and Principles of a New International", dated August 26, 1933, p. 49. The declaration was signed by the representatives of the four organisations on the day before the opening of the Paris Conference of "Left Socialist Parties" in which they were participating.
- (16) *ibid.*, p. 53, dated August 28, 1933.
- (17) *ibid.*, p. 17, dated July 20, 1933.
- (18) As the present writer can testify from having met him at a students' meeting at the L. S. E. about this time.
- (19) "Our Relations with the I. L. P." is a statement included in the internal bulletin of the group, "For Discussion", No. 15 - 16, issued October 12, 1933. It is not the same as the longer statement in the same bulletin "Our Work in and in relation to the I. L. P."
- (20) From the archives of the Workers' Revolutionary Party.

(21) *ibid.*

(22) One of the elements in the background of this proposal was the efforts which Brockway had been making for some time to draw the "Left Socialist" groups together. In particular there was a stronger sentiment for unity than usual in those circles in summer 1933 as a result of the catastrophe in Germany.

When in summer 1933 the Trotskyists were reaching the conclusion that the Communist International could no longer be regenerated and that the construction of new Communist Parties and a new International had to be undertaken, there already were several organisations in different countries and in different stages of development which were in opposition to Social-Democracy and which at the same time rejected the Communist International for various reasons. These organisations had developed as best they could, in response usually to social processes in "their own" countries, more or less in isolation from each other, using whatever theoretical resources their own experiences or casual outside influence provided. These organisations were therefore far from homogeneous politically. They also differed greatly in size and influence.

For many years since 1920 the leaders of the British I. L. P. and in particular Brockway pursued the hope of drawing such groups into an international association, to act in some sense as a bridge between the Labour and Socialist International and the Third, Communist International, or as an influence on them which might ultimately reconcile their differences and bring them into one unified body. This study does not discuss how far such projects were utopian after the collapse of the Second International in 1914 and the Russian Revolution. The experience of these endeavours in the middle and later 1930's (reviewed later in this study) suggests that Brockway combined great activity and finesse with an extreme political naiveté, and that the succession of international committees and conferences which he brought to birth by his efforts, were always characterised by verbal agreements reached by mutual concessions of principle and were therefore ineffective in presenting any effective check on or alternative to the policies of either Social-Democracy or Stalinism.

In one respect, however, Brockway's activities were effective. They complicated for the Trotskyists the process of laying the theoretical and organisational foundations of the Fourth International. In Britain in particular the sustained opposition of Brockway to the principles which the Trotskyists were seeking to establish proved a serious obstacle to their work.

After many years of "contacts" and conversation since the early 1920's, arrangements were made at a meeting in Berlin in May 1932 for representatives of the Norwegian Labour Party, the German Socialist Workers' Party (S.A.P.), the Dutch Independent Socialist Party, the Polish I. L. P. and Bund, the Italian "Maximalists" and the French Parti d'Unite Proletaire" (P.U.P.) and the British I. L. P.... Their association came to be called

the "I. A. G." (International Labour Community), the "Seven Lefts", or simply the "London Bureau", because its secretariat was in the office of the I. L. P. in London. Early in February 1933 this grouping issued a call for united action by the German Social-Democratic and Communist Parties in the face of the imminent threat of Nazism. In August 1933 the "International Conference of Revolutionary Socialist Parties and Groups", convened by the I. A. G., was held in Paris. The Trotskyist International Communist League was one of the participating organisations and a few days before the conference opened agreement was reached between the International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist), the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany, the Independent Socialist Party of Holland and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland on a joint declaration, the "Declaration of Four: On the Necessity and Principles of a New International" (see Leon Trotsky, "Writings: 1933 - 34", p. 49)

However, the leadership of the British I. L. P. opposed the declaration and as this was one of the leading organisations in the I. A. G., the Norwegian Labour Party leaders having begun to draw away from it, the political necessity to influence its future evolution was evident.

- (23) The Revolutionary Policy Committee was an open, organised faction in the I. L. P. which existed with varying levels of activity from 1931 to 1935. At first it played a part in organising the forces which won a majority of the delegates to the Special Conference of July 1932 to disaffiliation from the Labour Party. After disaffiliation the R. P. C. came increasingly under the pressure of the Communist International and lost some of the Left reformists who had earlier supported it. At the same time, its response to the difficulties which the policies of the "Third Period" presented to it was to adopt in a primitive form certain ideas of the Brandler-ite "Right Opposition", which were brought to it by emigrés from Germany. It consequently showed much more sympathy to the Communist International than to Trotskyism. At the end of 1935 the remains of the R. P. C. left the I. L. P. to join the Communist Party, leaving a Brandler-ite remnant in the I. L. P.... The R. P. C. is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four of this study.
- (24) ²³ "For Discussion", No. 15 - 16, October 2, 1933.
- (25) ²⁴ The date is derived from "Writings: 1933 - 34", p. 88, "It is Time to Stop", which was published in an un-numbered, un-dated internal bulletin of the British group, according to a note in "Writings: 1933 - 34", p. 353. The English text of the minutes of the Plenum about the entry into the I. L. P. and of the covering letter from the I. S., are in "For Discussion", No. 15 - 16. They are as follows:

"Extracts from the Minutes of the Plenum"

Meeting of 23/8/1933

Present: Bauer, Frank, Schwarz, Souso, Vitte.

Question of the entry of the English Opposition into the I.L.P.

Rough draft of letter to the English Opposition proposing entrance into the I.L.P.

Amendment; One or two comrades will have to remain outside the I.L.P. to represent the English Opposition, its press, etc.

Decision; Rough Draft of letter and amendment adopted unanimously.

For the Plenum.

Bauer.

The covering letter

August 21, 1933

British Section of the I.L.O.
London, England.

Dear Comrade,

From your letters we know of your connections with the Independent Labour Party of Great Britain and of your work in its midst. But all the information we receive on the internal situation makes us pose the question whether your organisation ought not to concentrate nine-tenths, if not ninety-nine hundredths, of its forces on the work in the I.L.P.... It seems to us, moreover, that there are no obstacles whatever for the entrance of the members of your section - all of them or of their majority - into the I.L.P.. At the Brussels conference Paton said that the I.L.P. now consists of six or seven factions. Under these circumstances there is every reason to believe that you could become the strongest of the factions.

With regard to the I.L.P. the Comintern is now carrying on a policy of "court-making" and apparently of financial pressure. As far as we know, the membership of the I.L.P. is in a frame of mind to accept the ideas of Communism. But being theoretically and politically insufficiently prepared, the I.L.P. may become the victim of the intrigues of the Stalinist bureaucracy which is capable only of demoralising and ruining the party.

You could and should enter the I.L.P. so as to lead it to the path of Bolshevism as well as to guard it from Stalinist machinations; these two tasks coincide with each other. Your work can be successful only under one condition; that you enter the I.L.P. not only to split this or that part from it but to help the party as a whole to become strengthened revolutionary by cleansing itself from opportunist tendencies and foreign elements. Do you consider our estimation as correct? Do you think it possible to make the above indicates true in all your practical work in the shortest time, of course on the basis of the principles of the I.L.O....

We are awaiting your answer with the greatest impatience.

Fraternally yours,
International Secretariat
of the I. L. O.

E. Bauer.

P.S. - To complete our proposal, we call your attention to the fact that your entrance into the I. L. P. implies absolutely the maintenance of your group and your press as independent organisations. For practical realisation this may mean that one or two comrades of the group will not join the I. L. P. and will be publicly responsible for the press and the activities of the English Bolshevik-Leninists.

- (26) The letters are:
"How to Influence the I. L. P.", d. September 3, 1933, in "Writings: 1933 - 34", p. 70.
"Principled Considerations on Entry", d. September 16, 1933, ibid. p. 84.
"The Fate of the British Section", d. September 25, 1933, ibid. p. 100.
"The Lever of a Small Group", d. October 2, 1933, ibid. p. 125.
- (27) There are full statements of the positions of the "majority" and the "minority" in "For Discussion", No. 15 - 16, dated October 14, 1933.
- (28) This letter has been provided by Mr. George Breitman, of Pathfinder Press, New York, who obtained the copy from the archives of the late James P. Cannon, in the Library of Social Science, New York:

"Com. J. P. Cannon

August 23, 1933

Dear Comrade Cannon,
I wish to write to you today on English matters especially, Within the past period the Independent Labour Party has made an enormous shift towards a revolutionary position. The old layer of bureaucracy remained almost as a whole in the Labour Party. The I. L. P. consists of the youth. In the leadership, however, there remain a few old men (Maxton, Brockway, Paton) who are by far not in accord among themselves.... For the rank and file of the I. L. P. the problems of revolutionary strategy constitute entirely a new field. In this the Stalinists reveal the preponderance of their routine. We need not doubt that promises of financial assistance are also not lacking, and, in its present social composition, the I. L. P. is very poor. Our small British group has good connections with the I. L. P. and exercises considerable influence there; the Imprecor complains bitterly about it, but by systematic work to strengthen this party, to cleanse it from the heritage of centrism, to protect it from Stalinism and to transform it into a truly revolutionary party;

The I.L.P. and

the British

Section

with

Supplement 29-33

276.

All this is absolutely possible now. Precisely in this is now needed the assistance of the American League. It seems to me that literary aid could be of decisive importance. First of all it is necessary that the Militant carry an analysis of the situation in the I.L.P. and in the British Communist Party, emphasising our friendly attitude toward the I.L.P. A number of articles and correspondence on the basis of new material are needed. The corresponding issues of the Militant should be sent in a considerable number of copies to the I.L.P. through our British section. Of course, the whole work should be carried on hand in hand with our British section.

The pamphlets and books published by the Pioneer Publishers would be of great importance for the educational work in the I.L.P. The question of program should be now placed on the order of the day in the I.L.P. and circles should be organised for the critical study of the Program of the Comintern. The Criticism of the Program of the Comintern published by you would be of value in this connection. Possibly a certain number of copies of this book as well as of others could be collected and sent to the British section (alas, they are not in a position to pay for it) especially for the work in the I.L.P... Other methods of assistance in the above indicated work will, of course also be found. The moment is a most responsible one! By making the necessary efforts we may be able to reap now what we have so patiently sown during the last years. I shall be very glad to have you write me on this as well as on American matters.

With Communist greetings,

Yours,
(signed) L. Trotsky

- (29) E.D.I. (Paris) has supplied a copy of a document of about 5,000 words in English headed, "Report on the Situation of the English Section". It bears a note, "Rough draft translation". It is dated September 22, 1933 and signed "Vitte".

Witte was a member of the Greek Section, named Demetrios Giotopoulos. In autumn 1933 he developed an opposition to the orientation towards the "Left Socialist" Parties, which he regarded as a "right" turn and conciliation towards centrism. His group, the Archio-Marxists, withdrew from the International Communist League in 1934 and joined the "London Bureau". On the eve of the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938 the forces round the Spartakos Group and the Archio-Marxists united into a single organisation which the Conference recognised as the Greek Section of the Fourth International and was represented there.

- (30) From a document written a few years later by a Trotskyist comes a political assessment of Hugh Morrison. This is the document headed, "Brief Outline of the British Movement (Very much subject to correction)". It appears to have been written in 1936 or the early part of 1937. There is no evidence as to its author,

and the present writer has been told by Earle Robertson that he did not write it. It was certainly written before autumn 1937 by which time the South African group (Ralph Lee) and Haston had joined actively in the "Militant Group" and would be expected to have been mentioned. The document was supplied by the Socialist Workers' Party, New York, from the archives of James P. Cannon. It speaks of Morrison as:

"An old left-oppositionist, who developed ultra-left positions and has never joined our organised work. He built up a large sale of our old "New International" in Glasgow and has a small group around him. Developed Bauer-ite position and no longer co-operates."

- (31) "International", Vol. 1, No. 4, 1970, p. 30.
- (32) "For Discussion", No. 12, August 28, 1933. Alas "For Discussion" No. 15 - 16 was to announce in October:
- "It is impossible to continue the publication of EXCERPTS and SUMMARIES. The collection and editing of the materials will go on, but until adequate facilities for publication are found, it is not possible to make these materials generally available".
- (33) *ibid.*
- (34) The original document was supplied by the late Mr. Jim Wood.
- (35) From the archives of the Workers' Revolutionary Party.
- (36) Sara-Maitland papers.
- (37) The original of the letter from the I. S. is in the Sara-Maitland papers. The minutes of the meeting of the entrust "committee" on December 3 is in the archives of the Workers' Revolutionary Party. The letter from the I. S. reads:
- "Comrade Groves wishes to know what the I. S. would do in the case the majority of the section would vote against entry into the I. L. P. and the minority would not submit to this decision. It seems to us that the question is posed incorrectly. It is necessary to do all to avoid a split and not ask in advance what the attitude of the I. S. would be in case of a split.
- "Comrade Groves places the question entirely on the level of formal discipline of the minority towards the majority, but completely evades the question of discipline of national sections with regards to the international organisation.
- "Although we are absolutely convinced of the erroneous-ness of the position of Comrade Groves and his co-thinkers

we had not the thought of resorting to an ultimatum with regard to our British section. We are not doing it now, although events and facts of the working-class movement for the last two-three months completely confirmed our proposition. Even less can we permit that the question be posed ultimately within the British section, that is, to bring the matter to a split.

"If the majority of the section despite an absolutely impermissible delay in the decision of the question, did not convince itself until now of the correctness of our proposition, the minority must be given the opportunity to enter the I. L. P. and carry on there the work on their own responsibility. We do not doubt that this experiment will lead to the change of position of the remaining comrades.

With best greetings, Fraternaly yours, INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT".

(38) Sara-Maitland papers.

(39) "For Discussion", No. 15 - 16, October 2, 1933. An example of this kind of activity appears in the advertisement in "New Leader", October 13, 1933, that Groves was to address the Clapham I. L. P. on October 15 on "A New International".

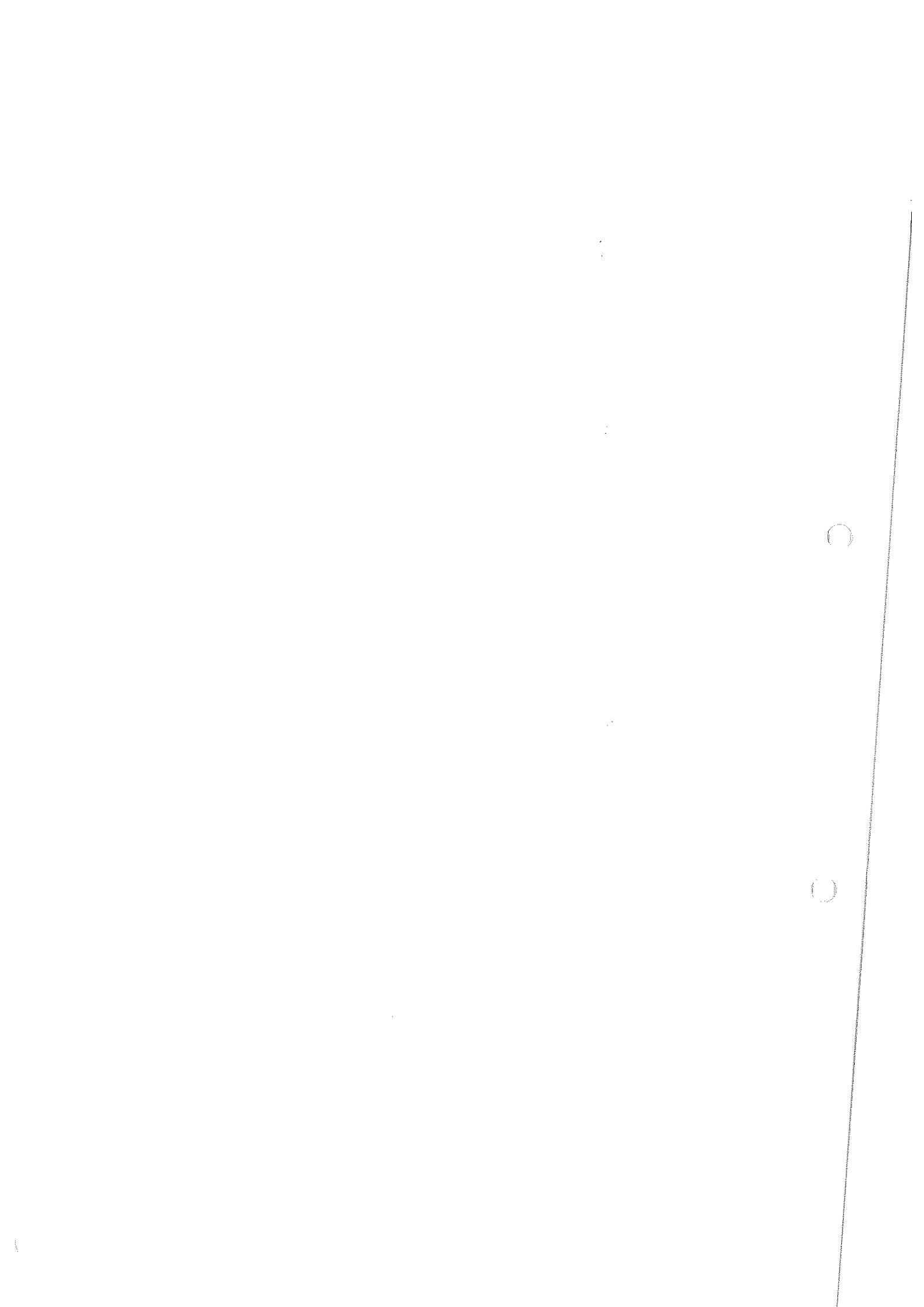
(40) Sara-Maitland papers.

(41) *ibid.* Trotsky spoke of "a group of forty" in "The Lever of a Small Group", written on October 2. Most of the members, if not all, lived in London, and in view of the importance of the decision to be reached nearly every active member of the group would have been likely to be present. There is a letter in the Sara-Maitland papers dated October 22, 1934, from Albert Weisbord to Henry Sara, in which the writer asks what had happened in Britain:

"Then there is the report by Brailsford that only about 30 of the 100 members of the Communist League followed the advice of Trotsky."

Weisbord was expelled from the Communist Party of U. S. A. in 1929 and organized a small group, the "Communist League of Struggle" which proclaimed its adherence to the International Left Opposition, though critical of the Communist League of America. The Communist League of Struggle used to send its bulletins to anyone whose address it could get, and if a set of them has survived, it would be found to provide an interesting running commentary on the Trotskyist movement. For reference to Weisbord, see, "Writings: 1935 - 36", p. 153, where Trotsky characterised him as:

"indubitably closer to the revolutionary type than Field. But at the same time he represents the purest type of sectarian. He is utterly incapable of preserving proportions,



either in ideas or actions. Every principle he turns into a sectarian caricature. That is why even correct ideas in his hands become instruments for disorganising his own ranks."

See also, *ibid.* p. 528 and Cannon, "History of American Trotskyism", p. 87 - 89 and 190 - 1.

- (42) Sara-Maitland papers.
- (43) Archives of the Workers' Revolutionary Party.
- (44) "Writings: 1935 - 36", "A Good Omen for Joint Work in Britain", dated April 9, 1936, p. 293.
- (45) "Writings: 1933 - 34", "Principled Considerations on Entry", September 16, 1933, p. 34.
- (46) *ibid.*, "The Lever of a Small Group", October 2, 1933, p.125.
- (47) *ibid.*, "How to Influence the I.L.P.", September 3, 1933, p.71.
- (48) "New Leader", November 28, 1953.
- (49) "Plebs", October and November 1933.
- (50) Annual Report of the Labour Party Conference 1933, p. 221.
- (51) Annual Report of the Labour Party Conference 1937, p. 163.

