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The road for revolutionary socialists

Fred Zeller

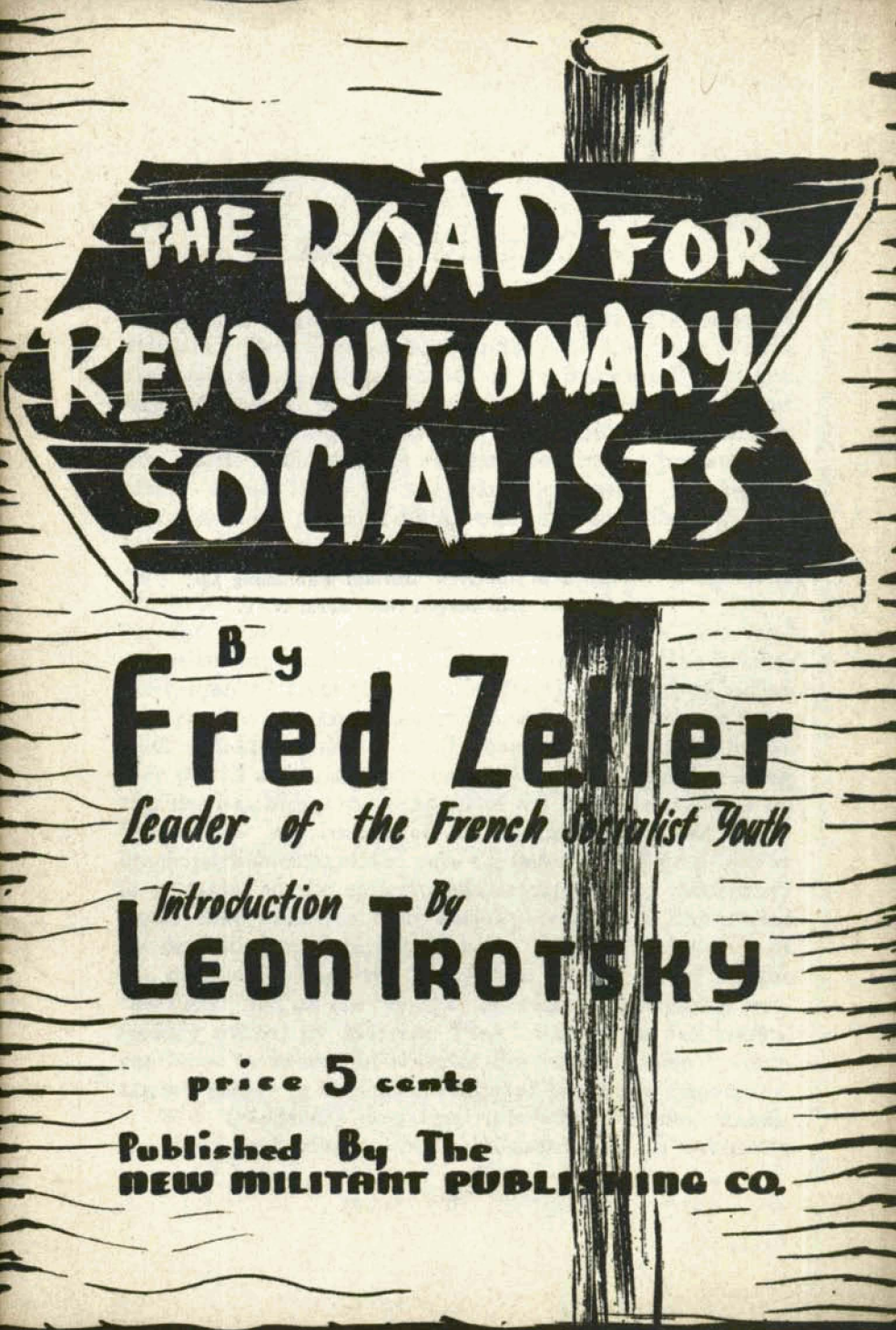
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**THE ROAD FOR
REVOLUTIONARY
SOCIALISTS**

By
Fred Zeller

Leader of the French Socialist Youth

Introduction By
LEON TROTSKY

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INTRODUCTION

This little pamphlet should meet with the warmest welcome. Comrade Zeller, Secretary of the Seine Youth organization, an active member of the Socialist Party, and large sections of the youth have travelled, during the recent period, a most important road—from Centrism to Marxism. This road need not be described in the preface, the reader should turn to the pamphlet itself. The reader would do best, perhaps, by first turning to Zeller's presentation which provides valuable factual and political material, and then turn back to this preface, the purpose of which is to draw the most pressing conclusions.

The expulsion of the leaders of the youth in Paris and of the leading members of the *La Verité* group (the Bolshevik-Leninists) from the Socialist Party is a fact of major importance. At the present moment a political regroupment is taking place in all the countries of Europe in the face of the maturing war danger. A differentiation along this line has begun in the ranks of the proletariat. Just as the extreme left leaders of the bourgeoisie discard democratic parliamentarianism once the defense of their property is at stake, so the opportunists trample party democracy under foot whenever their social-patriotism is threatened by revolutionary internationalists. Herein is the crux of the question. That the party tops have violated all the "statutes" and all the "norms" of democracy has been irrefutably proved by Marceau Pivert who, as is well known, continues to believe in statutes like certain naive "republicans" believe in the immutability of bourgeois democracy.

The traditional social-patriots—Leon Blum, Lebas, Zyromski and others—found themselves in an extremely

difficult position after the experience of the great war for "democracy." They feared the defeatist criticism of the Communists and the distrust of the masses. For this reason they sought to evade the question of national defense, to postpone a solution of it until the outbreak of the war, when the toilers would once again be caught off guard and it would be much easier under cover of military censorship to chain the party and the proletariat to the chariot of national defense. Suddenly—a stroke of luck! Soviet diplomacy arrived at the final conclusion that the reformist bureaucracy, hand in hand with the Radical bourgeoisie, is much more useful and reliable an ally than is the revolutionary proletariat. A command is issued from Moscow to fall in line with the social-patriots, and together with them to fall in line with the Radicals, the left party of French imperialism. What a pleasant surprise! Stalin, with both hands, hoisted Blum into the saddle of national defense. To be sure, in so doing he made so energetic a move that Blum became frightened lest he tumble over the other side of the horse. Hence Blum's plaintive articles: "It cannot be done so crudely; one must act more cautiously; one must not scare the lefts. . . ." The Seventh Congress of the Comintern took heed of Blum's counsels and enveloped its social-patriotic resolutions in a maximum of cloudiness. What more could be desired? The "united front" has slipped almost noiselessly into national unity. But from the left there suddenly came sharp, even threatening voices of protest. Moreover, not only from the Bolshevik-Leninists (they are an "alien body"!) but also from the majority of the Paris Youth. What to do? Debate with them? Unfortunately, easier said than done. Where are arguments to be found in defense of the social-patriotic betrayal? What is there to counterpose to revolutionary internationalism? Zyromski tried to raise as a cardinal argument the need of defending the U.S.S.R. It was Guesde himself, if you please, who taught the necessity of defending the

Russian Revolution. . . . Not only are the Youth laughing but even the Pioneers are beginning to laugh at this argument particularly from the lips of Zyromski. We know how Guesde defended French democracy: by becoming the minister of the imperialist government during the war. The Zyromskis, too, have in mind these very same methods—in essence if not in form—when they speak of the defense of the U.S.S.R. To this the revolutionary youth and the Bolshevik-Leninists together reply: we will defend the U.S. S.R. in the same way as we will defend ourselves, *by an irreconcilable revolutionary struggle against our own bourgeoisie.*

In view of these arguments of the left, the most extreme wing of the social-patriots fail to have any effect—the youth is for Karl Liebknecht and not Zyromski—what else was there left to do? Stifle, expel, crush! Casting aside the tinsel of phrases, *the expulsion of the revolutionary internationalists is equivalent to an action by the patriotic police with the aim of preparing national unity in the event of war.*

Naive people will object that there is some misunderstanding here. For Chochoy himself, the new National Secretary of the Youth, is “also an internationalist,” he is “also” against national defense, and yet he was for the expulsion of Fred Zeller and his comrades. Obviously, the guilty one is . . . Zeller. As a matter of fact, “internationalists” of the Chochoy type exist in nature precisely in order to assist Leon Blum to befuddle credulous people. The “internationalist” who places his friendship with the social-patriotic bureaucracy above the duties of revolutionary action, is, in reality, only a left link in the imperialist chain. At certain times, in order to screen its intentions and calm the masses, finance capital requires a Daladier, a Henderson, even a Lansbury. Once the setting shifts, finance capital shoos Daladier away, replacing him by Doumergue or Laval. In the same way, the social-patriotic

bureaucracy during certain periods has need of Chochoy for certain operations, in order, then, on the next stage, to remove and even expel him, should he attempt to open his mouth. Any one who has failed to understand this cunning mechanism—even if his beard be grey—remains a blind kitten in politics.

The Centrists of the so-called “Revolutionary Left” lecture us that they too are waging a struggle against the *ideas* of social-patriotism; however, they were not expelled: the mistake lies in the fact that the Bolshevnik-Leninists and Fred Zeller, together with his comrades, did not confine themselves to an ideological struggle, but resorted to personalities, permitting themselves attacks upon the “respected leaders” of the party. This is not a new argument, but it is well worth dwelling upon. At a time when the social-patriots by their apparatus repressions prepare and facilitate the coming police repressions against the defeatists, the Centrist rationalizers, whether they wish it or not, provide the bureaucracy with arguments to justify the expulsions. Let us bear this firmly in mind!

“It is necessary to wage a struggle against *ideas* and not *leaders!*” But this happens to be the classic argument of the “Left” Mensheviks against Lenin during the war. There is a German proverb that covers this case: there is no washing the sheep-skin without getting the wool wet. Ideas do not hang suspended in mid-air; living people are the bearers of ideas, people who unite in organizations and select their leaders. It is impossible to fight against bourgeois ideas without fighting against those leaders who defend these ideas within the proletariat and who are once again prepared to sacrifice the workers on the altar of patriotism. Those who do not desire, like Chochoy and his kind, to remain content by playing on Sundays on the flute of internationalism in a closed room in order to console their own souls, those who approach seriously and honestly the slogan of Marx and Engels, “Workers of the World Unite,” are

duty bound to say openly and courageously to the French workers: *Leon Blum, Marcel Cachin, Leon Jouhaux, Monmousseau and Co. are leading you on the road to disaster!* Let Marceau Pivert tell the youth whether—from the standpoint and principles of party democracy—a socialist has the right to speak the truth to his party, i.e., that the “respected leaders” are preparing a new betrayal? To all appearances, he has. As for us, in our opinion, the duty of revolutionary internationalists stands above all obligations towards the party bureaucracy and its “discipline.”

Leon Blum, Zyromski and others are not at all content to struggle against the *ideas* of Marx and Lenin but they open a rabid campaign against the young *leaders* who defend these ideas. Such is the inevitable logic of the struggle. But the Centrists refuse to understand this. The left Mensheviks rose up against Lenin’s “sectarian” methods only because they were internationalists in words while in action they felt their indissoluble bond with the social-patriotic leaders of the Second International. So, too, the rationalizers of the “Revolutionary Left,” observing the expulsion of the internationalists, scurry between the two wings, but conclude invariably by disassociating themselves from the—expelled. Why? Because the expellers are closer to them politically. They lecture to us that with our “sectarian” methods (i.e., the methods of Marx and Lenin) organizational unity would never have been achieved. In the meantime “the masses are striving for unity,” and we must not “tear ourselves away” from the masses. Before us here is the entire argumentation of the ill-starred leaders of the S.A.P.* who, it may be pertinently remarked, never had any masses behind them, haven’t any now, and will never

*The emigré groups of the Socialist Workers’ Party of Germany (S.A.P.), of whom there is rather a considerable number, play today the role of a brake in the workers’ movement of different countries.

have them in the future. We say in answer that the *instinctive* urge to unity is quite often an urge peculiar to the masses; but a *conscious* striving for unity on a *revolutionary basis* is peculiar to the *vanguard* of the proletariat. Which of these tendencies should revolutionary Marxists support? For example, the organizational unity of the working class has long existed in England. But at the same time it implies the political unity of the working class with the imperialist bourgeoisie. The traitor MacDonald sits in the conservative government of Baldwin; the patriot-pacifist Henderson, represented to his dying day, the conservative government in the League of Nations; Major Atlee, the new leader of the Labor Party, stands for imperialist sanctions set by the League of Nations under the dictation of the London Stock Exchange. Under such conditions "organizational unity" is a conspiracy of the workers' bureaucracy against the basic interests of the proletariat. But are things any better in France? In the days of Brest and Toulon, four bureaucratic apparatuses (the S.P., the C.P., the C.G.T. and C.G.T.U.) were absolutely "as one" in strangling and calumniating the uprising for the sake of a friendly smile from the Radicals. From its outset the united front in France was converted into an instrument of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The organizational merger of the two parties, if realized, would signify *under the present conditions* only the preparation for national unity. Jouhaux together with Monmousseau have already achieved trade union unity, with the interests of their apparatuses guaranteed but with fractions prohibited, i.e., they took measures beforehand to strangle revolutionary socialism. When Centrists, tailing the rights, begin to declaim too much about unity, the Marxist is duty bound to be on guard. *Unity between whom? In the name of what? Against whom?* Unless there is a clear definition of aims and tasks the slogan of unity can become the worst possible trap. The Marxists are for the unity of genuine revolutionists,

for the fusion of militant internationalists who alone are capable of leading the proletariat on the road of the socialist revolution.

This is not sectarianism. Marxists are the ones best able to find a road to the masses, and those who are as yet unable will learn on the morrow. The school of Lenin is a great school precisely in this sphere. Should the social-patriots arrive at an organizational agreement among themselves (and this is not so simple!), then the revolutionists—inside as well as outside the united party, depending upon circumstances—will wage an irreconcilable struggle for the emancipation of the workers from the *ideas* and *leaders* of reformism, Stalinism, social-patriotism, i. e., against the Second and Third Internationals which have become *the agency of the League of Nations*. The struggle for the independent policy of the proletariat, for the fusion of its vanguard upon a Marxist program, for the international unity of the workers against imperialism—this is the struggle for the Fourth International.

In the ebb and flow of our epoch, amid great defeats and disillusionments, in the growth of the conservative Soviet bureaucracy, the oldest generation of both Internationals has largely spent itself, become a hollow shell, and fallen prostrate. The building of the New International in its main weight falls upon the young generation. The obstacles are great, the tasks colossal. But it is precisely in the struggle against great obstacles that fighting cadres are formed and steeled. The *Seine Federation of the Youth* and after it the provinces as well should and can assume an honored place in this work. More faith in ourselves, in our forces and in the future! Let the philistines howl about the tactlessness, rashness and exaggerations of the youth! Cadres of a revolutionary party have never yet been educated either in ballet schools or in diplomatic chancelleries. The revolution is not only "tactless" but it is ruthless when need arises. That is why Messrs. Bourgeois hate Leninism

(they get along quite nicely with Stalinism). The social-patriots translate the fears of the bourgeoisie into the language of "sanctions", expelling young Bolsheviks from the party, while Centrist philistines curse on this account . . . the Fourth International. This need not worry us. All these processes take place in the thin layer of the bureaucracy and the workers' aristocracy. We must look deeper into the masses that languish in the chains of the crisis, hate their slave owners, seek to struggle, are capable of struggle, and have already made their first assault in Toulon and Brest. These masses need no hollow preaching on unity, not the false "tactfulness" of salons, but clear cut slogans and courageous leadership. It is our hope that Zeller's pamphlet will perform a service in the cause of educating the young cadres of the New International!

L. TROTSKY.

November 7, 1935

18th anniversary of the October Revolution.

A Lesson For Young Revolutionary Socialists



In recent years the Socialist Youth of France has been driven in different directions by swiftly-moving political cross-currents. This has been the logical and normal result of the development of the internal and external situation.

In the Seine district, particularly in the Paris region, the struggle against Fascism has taken on its sharpest and most violent forms during this period. It has therefore been in the Socialist Youth of the Seine that the crises and shocks have been most intense.

After the 1920 split the reformist leaders did their best to prevent the organization of the Socialist Youth. In 1923 they finally surrendered to the pressure of the younger elements in the party but drew up the statutes of the Socialist Youth in such a manner that it could have no separate activity or policy of its own. These statutes restricted the youth to "education" and workers' leisure activities. But the unprecedented economic crisis which began in the autumn of 1929 compelled us to look for more positive answers to the problems of our working class youth. The collapse of the working class parties in Germany and the advent of Fascism compelled us to study more closely the great political problems and tasks of international socialism.



There developed in the Socialist Youth a strong current toward unity which came under the influence of the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement (out of which sprang the Stalinist League Against War and Fascism.—Trans.). At the National congress of the French Socialist Youth at Puteaux, in 1933, a motion urging adherence to the Amsterdam-Pleyel movement was supported by 750 mandates and opposed by 4,000. Although several comrades were subsequently expelled for not submitting to the decision of the congress, the minority as a whole was still in its formative state and had not yet developed clear perspectives. Only through struggle inside the organization did it develop itself and begin to acquire more experience.

During this period when the ramifications of the Stavisky affair were just beginning to become apparent, the French Fascists conducted wide-spread agitation which culminated in the *coup de force* of February 6, 1934. Later, in Spain, political struggles led to the general strike and insurrection which were crushed in a few days despite the heroic resistance of the workers.

In the Federation of the Seine the reaction to these events was especially sharp. After the terrific defeats in Germany, Austria and Spain, with the obvious setback for the international proletariat which they signalized, we determined to exert all our efforts to resist Fascism in France and to realize the victory of our own revolution. It was very clear that the Socialist and Communist leaders had been overcome by events they had refused to foresee. They had collapsed pitifully in the face of the Fascist offensive.

For us, new perspectives which went far beyond the narrow limits of the parliamentary regime opened up. Once we had taken this road, naturally the party left us without precise directives, but the most active and determined of our Youth resolutely tried to find the way by themselves.

The Puteaux congress minority gathered strength and at the national congress held at Pres-St.-Gervais in 1934 it succeeded after a sharp struggle in winning 1,470 votes

for a motion which demanded greater freedom of action and discussion for the Youth. This minority clearly wanted to liberate itself from the tutelage of the party and to break cleanly with the reformist policy of class-collaboration. The bureaucracy was alarmed and did everything in its power to prevent the normal progress of our movement. In the Seine, however, we consolidated our positions, organized our resistance and grew in numbers.

* * *

Shortly before this the Bolshevik-Leninist Youth had entered our ranks to strengthen our positions.

Our new comrades came with an ideology entirely new for us, young social democrats that we were. They had the overwhelming advantage of having been raised in the Bolshevik school and of being the direct heirs of Lenin and Trotsky, organizers of the October Revolution. But despite our desire to strike out along a progressive road it seemed at first that between them and us yawned an unbridgeable gulf.

We had, as a matter of fact, been raised in the party with a hatred for Bolshevism. The social democracy had reconstituted its ranks after the post-war split not to fight the bourgeoisie but to settle with it and concentrate all its blows upon communism. This was the school in which we were educated.

From the day of their entry, the Bolshevik-Leninists criticized our leaders in the harshest terms. Our first reaction was to rally instinctively around the men thus attacked. The Bolshevik-Leninists treated as "petty-bourgeois reactionaries" those who did not agree with their program. The result of this was to array the whole organization against them. They sought to penetrate everywhere and under the pressure of a legitimate instinct for self-preservation we fought them. Although they developed their political positions vigorously, their methods made us uneasy. I was the responsible leader of the organization and considered it urgent and indispensable to organize a

campaign against them. We had the feeling that they had come not to stand at our shoulder but to fight us. We therefore organized in our turn a strong fraction which we called the *Revolutionary Socialist Youth* (Jeunesse Socialiste Revolutionnaire) which sought to distinguish itself both from the reformists and from the Trotskyists.

With great travail and political preparation, we published our platform which was clearly an advance beyond any of the texts we had published up to that time. After a vigorous struggle in the organization, we brought it to the Boulogne Congress of the Seine youth in February, 1935 and there defeated the Bolshevik-Leninists by a vote of 450 to 200. We thought we had finally averted the "Trotskyist danger."

We believed then in the possibility of pushing the Party as a whole in a revolutionary direction. The Bolshevik-Leninists completely rejected this perspective. This was a fundamental difference between us. But we had obtained an overwhelming majority and sought to assume the full federal responsibility which it gave us, excluding from the leadership all the Bolshevik-Leninists and Spartacus (S.A.P.) comrades.

It was not long before it became clear that things could not move forward in this fashion. Our majority was too heterogeneous to go forward intact for any distance. Above all, we had no clear perspectives. Under the pressure of events this majority was compelled to break up more or less rapidly into its component parts. It was inevitable and necessary that its most progressive section should effect a rapprochement with the Bolshevik-Leninists.

* * *

In March (1935) we signed a regional pact with the young Stalinists for unity of action. In this agreement we affirmed the necessity for vigorous action against the Bonapartist government of Doumergue, against the decree laws, against the sacred union and against the military apparatus of the bourgeois state. We affirmed and declared the

necessity for defending the Soviet Union by the revolutionary action of the international proletariat.

During this period the Social Democracy had visibly fallen deeper into the mire of treason. Riviere, Socialist deputy, declared in the name of the party from the tribune of the Chamber of Deputies: "*The Socialists are for the national defense of the regime!*" A little later Leon Blum in his turn assured the bourgeoisie and the General Staff from the same tribune: "*In case of Hitlerite aggression, the workers will go to the frontiers.*"

Against these declarations the Socialist Youth of the Seine organized a systematic campaign of agitation and propaganda against national defense of the capitalist state and for revolutionary defeatism.

This coincided with a new turn by the Communist International which was expressed in France by cessation of the struggle against the two-year military service law and against Circular 3084 (also relative to military service). It was expressed by refusals to demonstrate in front of the barracks and the refusal to fight the Fascists by independent class action.

The Young Stalinists took the position that it was not necessary to smash the Fascists. It was more effective to talk things over with them in order to convince them that it was better to be with us than against us. In the 3rd and 4th arrondissements this took the form of pacts between the Young Stalinists and the Young Patriots, a Fascist organization!

We protested vehemently. The reply of the two bureaucracies was to take steps to isolate us. Strong pressure was brought to bear from all sides and an underhand struggle was begun against us.

* * *

Early in April the Young Stalinists were taking long strides along the road of class-collaboration. They organized the "Great Youth Community" (Grand Communauté

de la Jeunesse) together with all the youth organizations of the bourgeoisie "in order to struggle against war."

They hoped to make use of us to develop Stalinist positions and the Stalinist policy of betrayal inside the French Socialist Youth. For this purpose they brought to Paris the secretaries of the Young Communist International, Kossarev and Chemodanov, who came to see us. They hoped to use us in order to develop the positions of Stalinism and its policy of betrayal inside the French Socialist Youth.

They asked us to carry on a campaign for adherence to the Third International and asked us to declare in favor of expelling the Trotskyists, "*whose policy,*" said Kossarev, "*is at the present moment a danger for the international proletariat.*"

"Do not hesitate," he added, "to make use of the reformists to get rid of them (the Trotskyists). They are against the unity of the workers and you have nothing in common with these counter-revolutionaries."

To this we replied:

"It is true that we are not always in agreement with them but nevertheless we always see them at our side in action. Besides, if they are expelled, we weaken thereby our own position and strengthen that of the bureaucracy. Moreover, we take as our point of departure a fundamental principle with which you should be acquainted: In the labor movement one must never use the Right wing to smash the Left."

This exchange was only a preamble, which had the merit, however, of opening our eyes to the general policy and tactics of the Stalinists.

Chemodanov had this to say:

"You have created a minority for purposes of struggle. If you do not have clear perspectives, you will break up. At the congress of Pres-St.-Gervais you raised your fists against the bureaucratic apparatus. Comrades of the J.S.R. (Revolutionary Socialist Youth), take care. Your leaders will not forgive such an attitude. The Blums, Paul

Faures, and others, will not play at the game of democracy with you. You can even be expelled at your forthcoming Lille congress. It is quite possible. Therefore we want to help you.

"In the Argentine, the Socialist Youth was dissolved by the reformist leaders. In Belgium the leaders brought pressure to bear on Godefroy, threatening to cut off all financial help. In Spain the Socialist Youth quit the Second International. In America the leaders have expelled many Young Socialists. In Switzerland the reformists led by Nicole are suppressing the Socialist Youth. So don't be too sure of yourselves.

"But it is not expulsion, but your perspectives which matter. Do you want to win over the youth? Both in the party and in the International that is at best a distant goal. Or do you intend to form an international between the Second and Third? That is difficult and fruitless. . . . There is another way. Get a new leadership in the Young Socialist International and do away with Ollendhauer. And then? What in essence are our differences?"

Chemodanov himself supplied a summary of them for us:

"If there is a war," he said, "it will undoubtedly be against the U.S.S.R. This will not be a war between imperialists but between classes. Where will the Young Socialists stand then? At the half way mark? With us or against us? They must clarify their position. If Hitlerite Fascism wages war against the U.S.S.R., it will be a war of Fascism against Communism. *Your duty, comrades, is at the front. If in this period you make your revolution in France, you are traitors.* . . . The Fascists must find themselves face to face with the united front of the countries which desire peace, the Russian Government and the French Government." (These citations are from the stenographic record of our meeting.)

These monstrous statements were not "mistakes" or "clumsy formulations." They were crowned fifteen days

later by the words which Stalin addressed to Laval, the representative of French imperialism:

"M. Stalin understands and fully approves the measures of national defense taken by France to raise its armaments to the level of its security."

In this way they hoped to use us to betray the supreme interests of the international proletariat. We indignantly refused. Chemodanov came not to win us away from reformism, but on the contrary, to push us into the arms of our bourgeoisie under the false pretext of defending democracy and fighting the chief enemy, German Fascism. To serve this cause, they wanted to yoke us to our General Staff.

Our road lay in the opposite direction. We set out on it with all our energy.

Joining in their efforts to smash us, the Socialist and Stalinist bureaucracies prepared for unity under the banner of the sacred union and class-collaboration.

To create a current favorable to a new 1914 and to broaden the psychological preparation for it, the bureaucracies expanded their unity of action into a "People's Front" in which there mingled indistinguishably Socialists, Communists, Radicals, "Left" Republicans, the League for the Rights of Man, etc., etc.

In fact, the working class parties are directly in the tow of the bourgeois parties. The leaders of the latter have been allowed to refurbish their tarnished escutcheons and to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the masses whom they have wronged and deceived in innumerable disastrous experiences. In order not to frighten or alienate the Radical leaders, the workers' parties erased from their programs everything of a revolutionary character. They now march behind the Tricolor as well as the Red flag, and sing the Marseillaise together with the Internationale.

In preparation for the big July 14 demonstration this year the bureaucrats conferred with the Radical leaders

and naturally paid the price demanded for Radical participation.

The Socialist Youth resisted this attempt to stifle the revolutionary will of the masses and planned to have its members march in their own name and in their own uniforms, behind their red flag and under their own slogans. The Stalinists, naturally, did not see things this way and were the most ferocious in the struggle that was launched against us. They strove by every means to prevent us from marching, bringing pressure to bear on our own bureaucratic leaders and on the Radical leaders as well.

At a meeting of the coordination committee of the Socialist Youth and the Young Communist League on July 3 at 5 P.M., the Stalinist delegates opened the battle at the beginning of the meeting. Their regional delegate said to us angrily:

“By marching separately in the uniforms of young workers’ guards, you are going to frighten the middle classes and the Radicals. As for us, we are expressly anxious that they should be with us in the People’s Front. They have an influence different from yours. Therefore we are making the greatest possible concessions to win them.”

We took due note of this confession, which was a pretty strong one. Finally, Ancelle, secretary of the Paris district of the Y.C.L., threw before us this pearl: “If on July 14 you insult the Radical leaders, the Tricolor and the Marseillaise, we’ll break your necks.”

We replied that we had not seen such ardor and so combative a temper among the Young Communists for a long time. We would be happy indeed, we said, if, as a matter of preference, they directed their energies against the Fascists and not against revolutionaries. Making so many sacrifices to secure the participation of the bourgeoisie, why not do as much to secure ours? What were we asking? Nothing more, nothing less than the Radicals. To march in our own identity, with our own slogans and behind our only flag.

Finding our resistance too stiff, the Stalinists took the issue to the Radical leaders in the meetings of the Organization Committee for the July 14 demonstration, where they said: "See here, the Young Socialists of the Seine want to give you a fright by marching in military order. Shouldn't we stop them?" The astonished radicals replied: "How can these young men marching in uniform affect us? Not at all. It's quite all right with us and does not embarrass us at all."

Mere Stalinist rage not being enough to affect our action, they then carried the fight to the National Mixed Committee of the Socialist Youth. Here they had their right-hand man, Rene Dumon, our national secretary. It was he who, in all meetings arranged by the People's Front, would invariably inject the statement:

...*"At the present hour those who insult the Tricolor and the Marseillaise are agents of the bourgeoisie, traitors, criminals and counter-revolutionaries."*

This was the language invariably used by Socialist, Stalinist and Radical speakers who found common ground in their hatred for the revolutionary grouping trying to raise its head.

Through Dumon, the Young Stalinists organized a joint meeting of their Central Committee, our Youth National Committee and the Youth Executive Committee of the Seine. The avowed purpose of this meeting, held at C. P. headquarters at 9 o'clock Wednesday evening, July 10, was to "make us understand our mistakes."

The Stalinists did not beat around the bush but came forward at once with a direct demand that we comply with their view of the matter or else not participate at all in the parade on the 14th. Rene Dumon strongly supported the Stalinists and was duly applauded by them for his efforts. After a while, the Stalinists came to an agreement on the basis of their demand with Louis Levy, an enthusiastic partisan of national defense and responsible Socialist party member in the Organization Committee.

We broke flatly with all of them and left the room declaring that we would never bow our heads before Stalin.

The next day, July 11, we met at 9 o'clock with the leading comrades of our organization and informed them in detail of what had happened and the situation in which we found ourselves. It was unanimously agreed to carry the matter through and to march even if we had to do so at the tail end of the parade. From that Thursday to Sunday the 14th, the Socialist Party (S.F.I.O.) boycotted us systematically, suppressing all notices of meetings and other announcements which we tried to insert in *Populaire*. But in the two intervening days we nevertheless managed to get word of our plans to our 75 Parisian sections and to the suburbs.

We printed 100,000 copies of a leaflet bearing our slogans on the People's Front and rented ten hotel rooms at various strategic points along the line of march. On the day of the parade, girl comrades were assigned to these rooms to sprinkle the demonstration with our leaflets.

On Sunday, at the appointed meeting place we had a splendid turnout of our comrades, trim in their blue shirts and red ties. Together with our defense groups, we were at least 2,000. In military order we took our place at the end of the enormous parade.

Right along the line of march, our success was strikingly evident. From one end to the other, it was one long series of acclamations for the Socialist Youth. All our slogans, shouted by us in rhythmic order, secured an immense success and found an echo in the masses of whom we were that day the only faithful interpreters.

"For a Workers-Peasants Government!"

"For a People's Front-of ACTION!"

"For a Workers Militia!"

"Down with National Defense!"

It was the response to these slogans which helped us understand why the Stalinists and our bureaucrats had tried so hard to prevent us from participating in the parade.

Beginning with that day, high up in the Socialist Party, the question of our expulsion was considered and carefully planned.

* * * *

Realizing the dangers, the Revolutionary Socialist Youth (J.S.R.), the Bolshevik-Leninists and the Spartacus group (French S.A.P.) united on a common motion and formed the Revolutionary Left of the Socialist Youth to participate in the national congress of the French Socialist Youth which took place at Lille on August 2-3.

To our 70 delegates of the Seine Youth were added the delegates of the Federations of the Cote d'Or, Loiret, Haute-Vienne, Rhone, Drome du Finistere, Morbihan, Isere, Morocco, Algeria and several provincial minorities. This compact, solid, powerful, and dynamic bloc frightened the reformist clan. After heaping slanders and calumnies upon us, they played upon the ignorance of the great majority of the delegates and induced them to vote for a motion expelling 13 representatives of the Revolutionary Left.

The pretext? Notorious lack of discipline, violent insults directed at the "venerated" leaders of the party. In reality, the reformist leaders hoped to disembarass themselves of a whole tendency which was struggling against the two bureaucracies, joined together under the aegis of sacred union and treason to the proletariat. They yoked to this task certain good militants of the Socialist Youth who became their lackeys. These militants assumed a left coloration in order to sow confusion, without realizing that at the same time they were preparing their own expulsion and signing their own death warrant. They will learn from their own experience and will credit us, at least, with having warned them.

The reaction in the Youth and in the Party was sharp. The decision was too sudden and too crude, too unexpected by the large majority. It exploded like a bomb. A very clear wave of sympathy for the Youth Entente of the Seine

immediately took shape despite the fact that the bureaucrats, feeling themselves endangered, were trying to decapitate it.

Three perspectives then lay before us:

1. To capitulate to the apparatus.
2. To remain silent and wait until they "would be ready to correct the mistake made at Lille."
3. To attack firmly and expose the fundamental political reasons for our expulsion by making our slogans known to the workers.

In the Seine the tendency led by the Spartacus (S.A.P.) group was a danger from the very day of the expulsions. It was doubly dangerous since it was led by a number of philistines entirely without links to the masses. Under the pretexts of "prudence" and "suppleness" and "maneuvers to achieve our end," the S.A.P.ists hindered and tried to demoralize our magnificent revolutionary movement. They played the game of the apparatus. They excelled at the game of whispering into all available ears their slanders about this or that leading comrade, saying that he was going too far, that he would spoil everything, that he would compromise our chances for reinstatement, etc.

In this manner they tried to spread confusion among hesitant militants. Everywhere they advised suspending all activity and suppressing our only weapon, the newspaper *Revolution*. They soon found their way to the bureaucrats and offered them their good offices to "arrange" matters . . . naturally, within "the framework of the party's decisions."

When it is a question of striking out on a real revolutionary path, centrists always hesitate, equivocate, call for "prudence" and invariably afterwards find a thousand good reasons for ranging themselves at the decisive moment on the side of the reformist apparatus, saluting the vanguard militants by slightly raising their hats and excusing themselves for being unable to do more. They have functioned everywhere in the same manner. In France they proved no

exception but they faithfully carried out the dangerous policies of the S.A.P.

We, on the other hand, believed that the French working class movement had arrived at an important historical turn. We considered that the Lille expulsions resulted from the collision between two policies between which conflict was daily growing more acute. These expulsions were a logical result of the evolution of the international and internal situation. They revealed in a strikingly clear manner the decomposition of the big working class parties. They heralded the firm wish of the Socialist and Stalinist bureaucracies to drive from their ranks, one after another, all those who refused to bow before the bourgeoisie and its General Staff.

Seeing that in the war crisis the policy pursued by the Second and Third Internationals was nothing but a reflection and an echo of the League of Nations, that there was no longer an independent working class policy on a world scale, that we were in reality witnessing the bankruptcy of the two Internationals and the decomposition of their national sections, we concluded that with relentless inevitability, today or tomorrow, the indispensable regrouping of the whole proletarian vanguard would take place on the basis of the principles of revolutionary Marxism. We thought, therefore, that the moment had come for the Young Socialists of the Seine boldly to take the lead in regrouping the real revolutionists and to raise high and firmly an unblemished banner.

To keep silent, then, to believe that the bureaucracy would readmit us, "excusing" itself for having expelled us, was in reality to avoid the real question, the real problem. It was to fail to understand the historical phenomena developing under our eyes, to fail to grasp the meaning of the events that were going to bowl over like scarecrows the Stalins, the Blums, the Cachins, the Vanderveldes, the Paul Faures, the Thorez, the Jouhaux the Monmousseaus and all the other lackeys of world imperialism.

* * *

Many militants are hesitating and are not sure that we are right. But it is certain that the sternest necessity will compel the regrouping of which we speak. The big parties will disintegrate, although at varying tempos. Everything will depend upon the rhythm of the development of revolutionary possibilities—and we have every ground for believing that such events are rapidly approaching in France. The bloody events of last August at Brest, Toulon and Cherbourg were sure symptoms and precursors of the big upheavals to come.

The past ten years have seen great setbacks for the international labor movement. The Social Democracy had the chance to re-form its ranks and to work within the limits and the legal structure created for it by the bourgeoisie. Today, on the contrary, one feels the labor movement reaching out for revolutionary solutions. That is why we believe it necessary to lead it, to guide it to the creation of a strong party which will forge itself in the struggle and carry us forward to victory.

The Communist Party, thanks to a powerful apparatus and considerable financial resources, thanks also to its heroic past, will resist for a longer period. It may even make certain gains. Workers, and especially petty bourgeois without any Marxist education who become radicalised under the pressure of the crisis, will still believe it to be the revolutionary party it was until 1926 and will take longer to realize that Stalin has learned nothing and forgotten everything of the great teachings of Lenin.

We see the truth of this when, in the joint meetings which we have with C.P. militants or in private conversations, we show them the meaning of Stalinist degeneration. Not rarely these comrades reply: "That is not true. We have not changed. We are still the same. We have remained faithful to Lenin. We are still revolutionary defeatists. We are also only for a workers and peasants government." They have not yet become aware of the profound and to them unrecognizable transformation that has taken place in

the general policy of the Communist Party and the Third International. Those who do know what it is all about are under no illusions. Former leaders of cells, districts and regions, who still have a particle of their revolutionary education left, recognize that we are right. Every day growing numbers of Young Communists are entering into contact with us.

We therefore said to ourselves: We will not be readmitted. We have to fight to the death against the sacred union and for an independent working class policy. So through and over the worst obstacles and in the face of the filthy slanders spread by the bureaucracy, we turned to the workers. We told them in detail what had happened. We showed them from day to day where the policies of the two Internationals were leading them and, in fact, had already led them.

These policies, in the case of Italy's imperialist attack on Ethiopia, urge them to support vigorously the League of Nations and demand that it apply military and economic sanctions—the only purpose of which could be to strengthen the imperialists to the detriment of the world proletariat.

These policies in France consist in preparing for a Left government of class collaboration, based purely upon legality and bourgeois democracy, in begging the Bonapartist government to dissolve and disarm the very Fascist bands upon which it rests. They consist, in short, in knifing and betraying the French working class.

We, for our part, have not retreated a step. We have surrendered nothing. We have given blow for blow and it is by reasons of our intensive activity and our positive work that we have led our militants along the right road, that the hesitant have rallied to our banner and that the Spartacus group has completely collapsed.

Through pamphlets, posters, and the newspaper *Revolution* (banned by the government at the time of the events at Brest and Toulon), by meetings and street demonstrations, we have made our position known. In the space of

two months we have made great headway. Our groups won 250 new members in the Paris region during this period, bringing our total in the Seine district to 1,900. In Seine-et-Oise 30 out of 45 groups stand with us and are recruiting enormously on the basis of our slogans. Sincere, honest, and thinking Young Communists are coming over to our positions. In one month alone 42 Young Communists and 30 from the Social Front have joined our ranks. Everywhere friends and sympathizers in large numbers are helping us and have formed *Revolution* Defense Committees. The circulation of *Revolution* has gone up from 7,000 four months ago to 15,000 now in an enlarged format. Before long it will be a regular weekly. Instead of having our forces weakened in the struggle against the party machine, we have won new strength in the Youth and in the working class itself.

We have aroused the whole party to the issue. All the adult sections have been visited and forced to discuss and take position on the expulsions. We have kept the militants from falling into the reformist trap in which the question is posed on purely formal and statutory grounds. Politically the militants of the adult sections have solidarized with us.

This progress compelled Marceau Pivert to leave Zyranski and to resign from the group "Bataille Socialiste" which was a sort of loyal "His Majesty's Opposition" inside the party. Pivert, however, stopped in the full middle of the road. "Neither to the right nor to the left," is the constitutional formula of the Pivert tendency. At the very first meeting of his group, which we attended, we tried to put him on his guard. We said to him: Be careful. Break cleanly and unhesitatingly. Do not try to create a vague electoral cartel in which you will be a prisoner and which will have no progressive significance for the revolutionary movement. Cut yourself clear of the Right and Center. Make the indispensable rapprochement with the Trotskyists. Do not encumber yourself with men who are more or less clever maneuverers but who will in reality be the direct

agents of the apparatus and keep you from embarking upon action when the time comes.

But Pivert and his comrades still suffer from one illusion. They still think that by operating "prudently" and using the "democracy" of the Party, they can take over the apparatus themselves. They simply forget that the reformists, when endangered, use the same methods of struggle as the bourgeoisie. We experienced this ourselves at Lille. But Pivert preferred to listen to the Centrist philistines of the S.A.P. who instinctively tried to grab at militants marching with full strong strides to genuinely revolutionary positions. Pivert will find out for himself what the results will be.

The Pivert tendency is nothing but a sort of "People's Front" inside the Socialist Party into which comrades drawn from all corners of the political horizon have been drawn together on a vague program. Here we find secretaries of sections which approved our expulsions and former leaders of little so-called left groupings who hope to find a new mass base for themselves by wiping out the stains of their past. It is obvious that this tendency cannot last. Under the pressure of events it will split wide open, just as our Revolutionary Youth fraction did. Its most active and soundest wing will find common ground with the Bolsheviki-Leninists. The other will return to the clan of the reformists and into the grip of the bureaucrats.

We have deep roots in the youth. That is what counts. Those who in the days to come will know how to express most clearly the will of the working youth, who will present it with a clean banner and clear perspectives, will win the victory in France. We are forging in our daily struggle the cadres of the great revolutionary party of tomorrow. We declare now loudly to the working class youth of France:

The Young Socialists of the Seine have passed through a number of experiences in the struggle. Now they have definitively broken with the bankrupt policies of betrayal of the two Internationals. In the face of a bourgeoisie prepar-

ing to fight they do not want to bend the knee but to fight back. They want a party and an international of struggle which is faithful to revolutionary Marxism, to the ideas of Lenin and to the glorious traditions of the Bolsheviks of 1917.

The Second and Third Internationals are nothing today but decomposing corpses.

Henceforth, for the regrouping of all the exploited of the earth under the banner of the Fourth International!

Long live the French revolution!

Long live the world revolution!

FRED ZELLER

November 8, 1935.

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