

# On The United Front

By Leon Trotsky. 2 March 1922

## I) General Considerations on the United Front

1) The task of the Communist Party is to lead the proletarian revolution. In order to summon the proletariat for the direct conquest of power and to achieve it the Communist Party must base itself on the overwhelming majority of the working class.

So long as it does not hold this majority, the party must fight to win it.

The party can achieve this only by remaining an absolutely independent organization with a clear program and strict internal discipline. That is the reason why the party was bound to break ideologically and organizationally with the reformists and the centrists who do not strive for the proletarian revolution, who possess neither the capacity nor the desire to prepare the masses for revolution, and who by their entire conduct thwart this work.

Any members of the Communist Party who bemoan the split with the centrists in the name of "unity of forces" or "unity of front" thereby demonstrate that they do not understand the ABC of Communism and that they themselves happen to be in the Communist Party only by accident.

2) After assuring itself of the complete independence and ideological homogeneity of its ranks, the Communist Party fights for influence over the majority of the working class. This struggle can be accelerated or retarded depending upon objective circumstances and the expediency of the tactics employed.

But it is perfectly self-evident that the class life of the proletariat is not suspended during this period preparatory to the revolution. Clashes with industrialists, with the bourgeoisie, with the state power, on the initiative of one side or the other, run their due course.

In these clashes – insofar as they involve the vital interests of the entire working class, or its majority, or this or that section – the working masses sense the need of unity in action, of unity in resisting the onslaught of capitalism or unity in taking the offensive against it. Any party which mechanically counterposes itself to this need of the working class for unity in action will unfailingly be condemned in the minds of the workers.

Consequently the question of the united front is not at all, either in point of origin or substance, a question of the reciprocal relations between the Communist parliamentary fraction and that of the Socialists, or between the Central Committee of the two parties, or between l'Humanité and Le Populaire. [2] The problem of the united front – despite the fact that a split is inevitable in this epoch between the various political organizations basing themselves on the working class – grows out of the urgent need to secure for the working class the possibility of a united front in the struggle against capitalism.

For those who do not understand this task, the party is only a propaganda society and not an organization for mass action.

3) In cases where the Communist Party still remains an organization of a numerically insignificant minority, the question of its conduct on the mass-struggle front does not assume a decisive practical and organizational significance. In such conditions, mass actions remain under the leadership of the old organizations which by reason of their still powerful traditions continue to play the decisive role.

Similarly the problem of the united front does not arise in

countries where – as in Bulgaria, for example – the Communist Party is the sole leading organization of the toiling masses.

But wherever the Communist Party already constitutes a big, organized, political force, but not the decisive magnitude: wherever the party embraces organizationally, let us say, one-fourth, one-third, or even a larger proportion of the organized proletarian vanguard, it is confronted with the question of the united front in all its acuteness.

If the party embraces one-third or one-half of the proletarian vanguard, then the remaining half or two-thirds are organized by the reformists or centrists. It is perfectly obvious, however, that even those workers who still support the reformists and the centrists are vitally interested in maintaining the highest material standards of living and the greatest possible freedom for struggle. We must consequently so devise our tactic as to prevent the Communist Party, which will on the morrow embrace the entire three-thirds of the working class, from turning into – and all the more so, from actually being – an organizational obstacle in the way of the current struggle of the proletariat.

Still more, the party must assume the initiative in securing unity in these current struggles. Only in this way will the party draw closer to those two-thirds who do not as yet follow its leadership, who do not as yet trust the party because they do not understand it. Only in this way can the party win them over.

4) If the Communist Party had not broken drastically and irrevocably with the Social Democrats, it would not have become the party of the proletarian revolution. It could not have taken the first serious steps on the road to revolution. It would have for ever remained a parliamentary safety-valve attached to the bourgeois state.

Whoever does not understand this, does not know the first letter of the ABC of Communism.

If the Communist Party did not seek for organizational avenues to the end that at every given moment joint, co-ordinated action between the Communist and the non-Communist (including the Social-Democratic) working masses were made possible, it would have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over – on the basis of mass action – the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power.

It is not enough to possess the sword, one must give it an edge it is not enough to give the sword an edge, one must know how to wield it.

After separating the Communists from the reformists it is not enough to fuse the Communists together by means of organizational discipline, it is necessary that this organization should learn how to guide all the collective activities of the proletariat in all spheres of its living struggle.

This is the second letter of the alphabet of Communism.

5) Does the united front extend only to the working masses or does it also include the opportunist leaders?

The very posing of this question is a product of misunderstanding.

If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organizations, whether party or trade

union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question of the united front would not exist in its present form.

The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organizations or support them. Their present experience is still insufficient to enable them to break with the reformist organizations and join us. It may be precisely after engaging in those mass activities, which are on the order of the day, that a major change will take place in this connection. That is just what we are striving for. But that is not how matters stand at present. Today the organized portion of the working class is broken up into three formations.

One of them, the Communist, strives toward the social revolution and precisely because of this supports concurrently every movement, however partial, of the toilers against the exploiters and against the bourgeois state.

Another grouping, the reformist, strives toward conciliation with the bourgeoisie. But in order not to lose their influence over the workers reformists are compelled, against the innermost desires of their own leaders, to support the partial movements of the exploited against the exploiters.

Finally, there is a third grouping, the centrist, which constantly vacillates between the other two, and which has no independent significance.

The circumstances thus make wholly possible joint action on a whole number of vital issues between the workers united in these three respective organizations and the unorganized masses adhering to them.

The Communists, as has been said, must not oppose such actions but on the contrary must also assume the initiative for them, precisely for the reason that the greater is the mass drawn into the movement, the higher its self-confidence rises, all the more self-confident will that mass movement be and all the more resolutely will it be capable of marching forward, however modest may be the initial slogans of struggle. And this means that the growth of the mass aspects of the movement tends to radicalize it, and creates much more favourable conditions for the slogans, methods of struggle, and, in general, the leading role of the Communist Party.

The reformists dread the revolutionary potential of the mass movement; their beloved arena is the parliamentary tribune, the trade-union bureaux, the arbitration boards, the ministerial antechambers.

On the contrary, we are, apart from all other considerations, interested in dragging the reformists from their asylums and placing them alongside ourselves before the eyes of the struggling masses. With a correct tactic we stand only to gain from this. A Communist who doubts or fears this resembles a swimmer who has approved the theses on the best method of swimming but dares not plunge into the water.

6) Unity of front consequently presupposes our readiness, within certain limits and on specific issues, to correlate in practice our actions with those of reformist organizations, to the extent to which the latter still express today the will of important sections of the embattled proletariat.

But, after all, didn't we split with them? Yes, because we disagree with them on fundamental questions of the working-class movement.

And yet we seek agreement with them? Yes, in all those cases where the masses that follow them are ready to engage in joint struggle together with the masses that follow us and when they, the reformists, are to a lesser or greater degree compelled to become an instrument of this struggle.

But won't they say that after splitting with them we still need them? Yes, their blabbermouths may say this. Here and there somebody in our own ranks may take fright at it. But as regards the broad working masses – even those who do not follow us and who do not as yet understand our goals but who do see two or three labour organizations leading a parallel existence – these masses will draw from our conduct this conclusion, that despite the split we are doing everything in our power to facilitate unity in action for the masses.

7) A policy aimed to secure the united front does not of course contain automatic guarantees that unity in action will actually be attained in all instances. On the contrary, in many cases and perhaps even the majority of cases, organizational agreements will be only half-attained or perhaps not at all. But it is necessary that the struggling masses should always be given the opportunity of convincing themselves that the non-achievement of unity in action was not due to our formalistic irreconcilability but to the lack of real will to struggle on the part of the reformists.

In entering into agreements with other organizations, we naturally obligate ourselves to a certain discipline in action. But this discipline cannot be absolute in character. In the event that the reformists begin putting brakes on the struggle to the obvious detriment of the movement and act counter to the situation and the moods of the masses, we as an independent organization always reserve the right to lead the struggle to the end, and this without our temporary semi-allies.

This, may give rise to a new sharpening of the struggle between us and the reformists. But it will no longer involve a simple repetition of one and the same set of ideas within a shut-in circle but will signify – provided our tactic is correct – the extension of our influence over new, fresh groups of the proletariat.

8) It is possible to see in this policy a rapprochement with the reformists only from the standpoint of a journalist who believes that he rids himself of reformism by ritualistically criticizing it without ever leaving his editorial office but who is fearful of clashing with the reformists before the eyes of the working masses and giving the latter an opportunity to appraise the Communist and the reformist on the equal plane of the mass struggle. Behind this seeming revolutionary fear of "rapprochement" there really lurks a political passivity which seeks to perpetuate an order of things wherein the Communists and reformists each retain their own rigidly demarcated spheres of influence, their own audiences at meetings, their own press, and all this together creates an illusion of serious political struggle.

9) We broke with the reformists and centrists in order to obtain complete freedom in criticizing perfidy, betrayal, indecision and the half-way spirit in the labour movement. For this reason any sort of organizational agreement which restricts our freedom of criticism and agitation is absolutely unacceptable to us. We participate in a united front but do not for a single moment become dissolved in it. We function in the united front as an independent detachment. It is precisely in the course of struggle that broad masses must learn from experience that we fight better than the others, that we see more clearly than the others, that we are more audacious and resolute. In this way, we shall bring closer the hour of the united revolutionary front under the undisputed Communist leadership.

II) Groupings in the French Labour Movement

10) If we propose to analyse the question of the united front as it applies to France, without leaving the ground of the foregoing theses which flow from the entire policy of the Communist International, then we must ask ourselves: Do we have in France a situation in which the Communists represent, from the standpoint of practical actions, an insignificant magnitude (quantité négligeable)? Or do they,

on the contrary, encompass the overwhelming majority of organized workers? Or do they perhaps occupy an in-between position? Are they sufficiently strong to make their participation in the mass movement of major importance, but not strong enough to concentrate the undisputed leadership in their own hands?

It is quite incontestable that we have before us precisely the latter case in France.

11) In the party sphere the predominance of the Communists over the reformists is overwhelming. The Communist organization and the Communist press surpass by far in numbers, richness and vitality the organization and press of the so-called Socialists.

This overwhelming preponderance, however, far from secures to the French Communist Party the complete and unchallenged leadership of the French proletariat, inasmuch as the latter is still strongly under the influence of anti-political and anti-party tendencies and prejudices, the arena for whose operation is primarily provided by the trade unions.

12) The outstanding peculiarity of the French labour movement consists in this, that the trade unions have long served as an integument or cover for a peculiar anti-parliamentary political party which bears the name of syndicalism. Because, however the revolutionary syndicalists may try to demarcate themselves from politics or from the party, they can never refute the fact that they themselves constitute a political party which seeks to base itself on trade-union organizations of the working class. This party has its own positive, revolutionary, proletarian tendencies, but it also has its own extremely negative features, namely, the lack of a genuinely definitive program and a rounded organization. The organization of the trade unions by no means corresponds with the organization of syndicalism. In the organizational sense, the syndicalists represent amorphous political nuclei, grafted upon the trade unions.

The question is further complicated by the fact that the syndicalists, like all other political groupings in the working class, have split, after the war, into two sections: the reformists who support bourgeois society and are thereby compelled to work hand in hand with parliamentary reformists; and the revolutionary section which is seeking ways to overthrow bourgeois society and is thereby, in the person of its best elements, moving toward Communism.

It was just this urge to preserve the unity of the class front which inspired not only the Communists but also the revolutionary syndicalists with the absolutely correct tactic of fighting for the unity of the trade-union organization of the French proletariat. On the other hand, with the instinct of bankrupts who sense that before the eyes of the working masses they cannot, in action, in struggle, meet the competition of the revolutionary wing, Jouhaux, Merrheim and Co. have taken the path of split. The colossally important struggle now unfolding throughout the entire trade-union movement of France, the struggle between the reformists and the revolutionists, is for us at the same time a struggle for the unity of the trade-union organization and the trade-union front.

III) The Trade-Union Movement and the United Front

13) French Communism finds itself in an extremely favourable position precisely with regard to the idea of the united front. In the framework of political organization, French Communism has succeeded in conquering the majority of the old Socialist Party, whereupon the opportunists added to all their other political credentials the quality of "Dissidents", that is, splitters. Our French party has made use of this in the sense that it has branded the social-reformist organization with the label of Dissidents (splitters), thus singling out the fact that the reformists are disrupters of unity in action and unity of organization alike.

14) In the field of the trade-union movement, the revolutionary wing and above all the Communists cannot hide either from themselves or their adversaries how profound are the differences between Moscow and Amsterdam - differences which are by no means simple shadings within the ranks of the labour movement but a reflection of the profoundest contradiction which is tearing modern society apart, namely, the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But at the same time the revolutionary wing, i.e., first and foremost the conscious Communist elements, never sponsored, as has been said, the tactic of leaving the trade unions or of splitting the trade-union organization. Such slogans are characteristic only of sectarian groupings of "localists", of the KAPD, of certain "libertarian" anarchist grouplets in France, which never wielded any influence among broad working masses, which neither aspire nor strive to gain this influence but are content with small churches of their own, each with its rigidly demarcated congregation. The truly revolutionary elements among the French syndicalists have felt instinctively that the French working class can be won on the arena of the trade-union movement only by counterposing the revolutionary viewpoint and the revolutionary methods to those of the reformists on the arena of mass action, while preserving at the same time the highest possible degree of unity in action.

15) The system of cells in the trade-union organizations adopted by the revolutionary wing signifies nothing else but the most natural form of struggle for ideological influence and for unity of front without disrupting the unity of organization.

16) Like the reformists of the Socialist Party, the reformists of the trade-union movement took the initiative for the split. But it was precisely the experience of the Socialist Party that largely inspired them with the conclusion that time worked in favour of Communism, and that it was possible to counteract the influence of experience and time only by forcing a split. On the part of the ruling CGT (the French Confederation of Labour) clique we see a whole system of measures designed to disorganize the left wing, to deprive it of those rights which the trade-union statutes afford it, and, finally, through open expulsion - counter to all statutes and regulations - to formally place it outside the trade-union organization.

On the other hand, we see the revolutionary wing fighting to preserve its rights on the grounds of the democratic norms of workers' organizations and resisting with all its might the split implanted from above by appealing to the rank and file for unity of the trade-union organization.

17) Every thinking French worker must be aware that when the Communists comprised one-sixth or one-third of the Socialist Party they did not attempt to split, being absolutely certain that the majority of the party would follow them in the near future. When the reformists found themselves reduced to one-third, they split away, nursing no hopes to again win the majority of the proletarian vanguard.

Every thinking French worker must be aware that when the revolutionary elements were confronted with the problem of the trade-union movement, they, still an insignificant minority at the time, decided it in the sense of working in common organizations, being certain that the experience of the struggle in the conditions of the revolutionary epoch would quickly impel the majority of the unionized workers to the side of the revolutionary program. When the reformists, however, perceived the growth of the revolutionary wing in the trade unions, they - nursing no hopes of coping with it on a competitive basis - resorted immediately to the methods of expulsion and split.

Hence flow conclusions of greatest importance:

First, the full depth of the differences which reflect, as has been said, the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, becomes clarified.

Secondly, the hypocritical "democratism" of the opponents of proletarian dictatorship is being exposed to the very roots, inasmuch as these gentlemen are averse to tolerating methods of democracy, not only in the framework of the state, but also in the framework of workers' organizations. Whenever the latter turn against them, they either split away themselves, like the Dissidents in the party, or expel others, like the clique of Jouhaux-Dumoulin. It is truly monstrous to suppose that the bourgeoisie would ever agree to permit the struggle against the proletariat to come to a decision within the framework of democracy, when even the agents of the bourgeoisie inside the trade-union and political organizations are opposed to solving the questions of the labour movement on the basis of norms of workers' democracy which they themselves voluntarily adopted.

18) The struggle for the unity of the trade-union organization and trade-union action will remain in the future as well one of the most important tasks of the Communist Party - a struggle not only in the sense of constantly striving to unite ever larger numbers of workers around the program and tactics of Communism, but also in the sense that the Communist Party - on the road to the realization of this goal - both directly and through Communists in the trade unions, strives in action to reduce to a minimum those obstacles which are placed before the workers' movement by an organizational split.

If in spite of all our efforts to restore unity, the split in the CGT becomes sealed in the immediate future, this would not at all signify that the CGT Unitaire [3] regardless of whether half or more than half of the unionized workers join it in the next period, will conduct its work by simply ignoring the existence of the reformist CGT. Such a policy would render difficult in the extreme - if not exclude altogether - the possibility of co-ordinated militant actions of the proletariat, and at the same time would make it extremely easy for the reformist CGT to play, in the interests of the bourgeoisie, the role of La Ligue Civique [4] as regards strikes, demonstrations, etc.; and it would simultaneously provide the reformist CGT with a semblance of justification in arguing that the revolutionary CGTU provokes inexpedient public actions and must bear full responsibility for them. It is perfectly self-evident that in all cases where circumstances permit, the revolutionary CGTU will, whenever it deems it necessary to undertake some campaign, openly address itself to the reformist CGT with specific proposals and demands for a concrete plan of co-ordinated actions, and bring to bear the pressure of labour's public opinion and expose before this public opinion each hesitating and evasive step of the reformists.

In this way, even in the event that the split of the trade-union organization becomes permanent, the methods of struggle for the united front will preserve all their meaning.

19) We can, therefore, state that in relation to the most important field of the labour movement - the trade unions - the tactic of the united front demands that those methods, by which the struggle against Jouhaux and Co. has already been conducted on our side, be applied more consistently, more persistently and resolutely than ever before.

#### IV) The Political Struggle and the United Front

20) On the party plane there is, to begin with, a very important difference from the trade unions in this, that the preponderance of the Communist Party over the Socialist, both in point of organization and the press, is overwhelming. We may consequently assume that the Communist Party, as such, is capable of securing the unity of the political front and that therefore it has no impelling reasons for addressing itself to the organization of the Dissidents with any sort of proposals for concrete actions. This strictly businesslike and legitimate method of posing the question, on the basis of evaluating the relationship of forces and not on the basis of verbal radicalism, must be appraised on its substantive merits.

21) If we take into account that the Communist Party numbers 130,000 members, while the Socialists number 30,000, then the enormous successes of Communist ideas in France become apparent. However, if we take into account the relation between these figures and the numerical strength of the working class as a whole, together with the existence of reformist trade unions and of anti-Communist tendencies within the revolutionary trade unions, then the question of the hegemony of the Communist Party inside the labour movement will confront us as a very difficult task, still far from solved by our numerical superiority over the Dissidents. The latter may under certain conditions prove to be a much more important counter-revolutionary factor within the working class than might appear, if one were to judge solely from the weakness of their organization and the insignificant circulation and ideological content of their paper, *Le Populaire*.

22) In order to evaluate a situation, it is necessary to take clear cognizance of how this situation took shape. The transformation of the majority of the old Socialist Party into the Communist Party came as a result of a wave of dissatisfaction and mutiny engendered in all countries in Europe by the war. The example of the Russian Revolution and the slogans of the Third International seemed to point a way out. The bourgeoisie, however, was able to maintain itself throughout 1919-20 and was able, by means of combined measures, to establish on post-war foundations a certain equilibrium, which is being undermined by the most terrible contradictions and which is heading toward vast catastrophes, which meanwhile provides relative stability for the current day and for the period immediately ahead. The Russian Revolution, in surmounting the greatest difficulties and obstacles created by world capitalism, has been able to achieve its socialist tasks only gradually, only at the cost of an extraordinary strain upon all its forces. As a result, the initial flood-tide of vague, uncritical, revolutionary moods has been unavoidably superseded by an ebb. Only the most resolute, audacious and youthful section of the world working class has remained under the banner of Communism.

This does not mean naturally that those broad circles of the proletariat who have been disillusioned in their hopes for immediate revolution, for swift radical transformations, etc., have wholly returned to the old pre-war positions. No, their dissatisfaction is deeper than ever before, their hatred of the exploiters is fiercer. But at the same time they are politically disoriented, they do not see the paths of struggle, and therefore remain passively expectant - giving rise to the possibility of sharp swings to this or that side, depending on how the situation unfolds.

This big reservoir of the passive and the disoriented can, under a certain combination of circumstances, be widely utilized by the Dissidents against us.

23) In order to support the Communist Party, faith in the revolutionary cause, will to action and loyalty are needed. In order to support the Dissidents, disorientation and passivity are necessary and sufficient. It is perfectly natural for the revolutionary and dynamic section of the working class to effuse from its ranks a much larger proportion of members for the Communist Party than the passive and disoriented section is able to supply to the party of the Dissidents.

The same thing applies to the press. The elements of indifferentism read little. The insignificant circulation and content of *Le Populaire* mirrors the mood of a certain section of the working class. The fact that complete ascendancy of the professional intellectuals over the workers prevails in the party of the Dissidents runs nowise counter to our diagnosis and prognosis. Because the passive and partially disillusioned, partially disoriented worker-masses are an ideal culture medium, especially in France, for political cliques composed of attorneys and journalists, reformist witch-doctors and parliamentary charlatans.

24) If we regard the party organization as an operating army, and the unorganized mass of workers as the reserves, and if we grant that our operating army is three to four times stronger than the active army of Dissidents, then, under a certain combination of circumstances, the reserves may prove to be divided between ourselves and the social-reformists in a proportion much less favourable to us.

25) The political atmosphere of France is pervaded with the idea of the "Left Bloc". After a new period of Poincaré-ism which represents the bourgeoisie's attempt to serve up to the people a warmed-over hash of the illusions of victory, a pacifist reaction may quite likely set in among broad circles of bourgeois society, i.e., first and foremost among the petty bourgeoisie. The hope for universal pacification, for agreement with soviet Russia, obtaining raw materials and payments from her on advantageous terms, cuts in the burden of militarism, and so on - in brief, the illusory program of democratic pacifism - can become for a while the program of a "Left Bloc", superseding the National Bloc.

From the standpoint of the development of the revolution in France, such a change of régimes will be a step forward only provided the proletariat does not fall prey to any extent to the illusions of petty-bourgeois pacifism.

26) Reformist-Dissidents are the agency of the "Left Bloc" within the working class. Their successes will be the greater, all the less the working class as a whole is seized by the idea and practice of the united front against the bourgeoisie. Layers of workers, disoriented by the war and by the tardiness of the revolution, may venture to support the "Left Bloc" as a lesser evil, in the belief that they do not thereby risk anything at all, or because they see no other road at present.

27) One of the most reliable methods of counteracting inside the working class the moods and ideas of the "Left Bloc", i.e., a bloc between the workers and a certain section of the bourgeoisie against another section of the bourgeoisie, is through promoting persistently and resolutely the idea of a bloc between all the sections of the working class against the whole bourgeoisie.

28) In relation to the Dissidents this means that we must not permit them to occupy with impunity an evasive, temporizing position on questions relating to the labour movement, and to use platonic declarations of sympathy for the working class as a cover for utilizing the patronage of the bourgeois oppressors. In other words, we can and must, in all suitable instances, propose to the Dissidents a specific form of joint aid to strikers, to locked-out workers, unemployed, war invalids, etc., etc., recording before the eyes of the masses their responses to our precise proposals, and in this way driving a wedge between them and certain sections of politically indifferent or semi-indifferent masses on whom the reformists hope to lean for support under certain favourable conditions.

29) This kind of tactic is all the more important in view of the fact that the Dissidents are unquestionably bound up intimately with the reformist CGT and together with the latter constitute the two wings of the bourgeois agency inside the labour movement. We take the offensive both on the trade-union and political fields simultaneously against this twofold agency, applying the very same tactical methods.

30) The impeccable and agitationally extremely persuasive logic of our conduct is as follows: "You, the reformists of trade unionism and socialism," we say to them before the eyes of the masses, "have split the trade unions and the party for the sake of ideas and methods which we consider wrong and criminal. We demand that you at least refrain from placing a spoke in the wheel during the partial and unpostponable concrete tasks of the working-class struggle and that you make possible unity in action. In the given concrete situation we propose such and such a program of struggle."

31) The indicated method could be similarly employed and not without success in relation to parliamentary and municipal activities. We say to the masses, "The Dissidents, because they do not want the revolution, have split the mass of the workers. It would be insanity to count upon their helping the proletarian revolution. But we are ready, inside and outside the parliament, to enter into certain practical agreements with them, provided they agree, in those cases where one must choose between the known interests of the bourgeoisie and the definite demands of the proletariat, to support the latter in action. The Dissidents can be capable of such actions only if they renounce their ties with the parties of the bourgeoisie, that is, the 'Left Bloc' and its bourgeois discipline."

If the Dissidents were capable of accepting these conditions, then their worker-followers would be quickly absorbed by the Communist Party. Just because of this, the Dissidents will not agree to these conditions. In other words, to the clearly and precisely posed question whether they choose a bloc with the bourgeoisie or a bloc with the proletariat - in the concrete and specific conditions of mass struggle - they will be compelled to reply that they prefer a bloc with the bourgeoisie. Such an answer will not pass with impunity among the proletarian reserves on whom they are counting.

#### V) Internal Tasks of the Communist Party

32) The foregoing policy presupposes, naturally, complete organizational independence, ideological clarity and revolutionary firmness of the Communist Party itself.

Thus, for example, it would be impossible to conduct with complete success a policy aimed at making hateful and contemptible the idea of the "Left Bloc" among the working class, if in our own party ranks there are partisans of this "Left Bloc" bold enough openly to defend this projected program of the bourgeoisie. Unconditional and merciless expulsion in disgrace of those who come out in favour of the idea of the "Left Bloc" is a self-understood duty of the Communist Party. This will cleanse our policy of all elements of equivocation and unclarity; this will attract the attention of advanced workers to the acute character of the issue of the "Left Bloc" and will demonstrate that the Communist Party does not trifle with the questions which imperil the revolutionary unity in action of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie.

33) Those who seek to use the idea of the united front for agitating in favour of unification with the reformists and Dissidents must be mercilessly ejected from our party, inasmuch as they serve as the agency of the Dissidents in our ranks and are deceiving the workers concerning the reasons for the split and who is really responsible for it. Instead of correctly posing the question of the possibility of this or that co-ordinated, practical action with the Dissidents, despite their petty-bourgeois and essentially counter-revolutionary character, they are demanding that our own party renounce its Communist program and revolutionary methods. The ejection of such elements, mercilessly and in disgrace, will best demonstrate that the tactic of the workers' united front in no way resembles capitulation to or reconciliation with the reformists. The tactic of the united front demands from the party complete freedom in manoeuvring, flexibility and resoluteness. To make this possible, the party must clearly and specifically declare at every given moment just what its wishes are, just what it is striving for, and it must comment authoritatively, before the eyes of the masses, on its own steps and proposals.

34) Hence flows the complete inadmissibility for individual party members to issue on their own responsibility and risk political publications in which they counterpose their own slogans, methods of action and proposals to the slogans, methods of action and proposals of the party. Under the cover of the Communist Party and consequently also inside that milieu which is influenced by a Communist cover, i.e., in

a workers' milieu, they spread from day to day ideas hostile to us, or they sow confusion and scepticism which are even more pernicious than avowedly hostile ideologies. Periodicals of this type, together with their editors, must once and for all be placed outside the party and the entire working-class France must learn about this from articles which mercilessly expose the petty-bourgeois smugglers who operate under a Communist flag.

35) From what has been said, it likewise follows that it is completely inadmissible for the leading party publications to carry side by side with articles defending the basic concepts of Communism, other articles disputing these concepts or denying them. Absolutely impermissible is a continuation of a régime in the party press under which the mass of worker-readers find, in the guise of editorials in leading Communist periodicals, articles which try to turn us back to positions of tearful pacifism and which propagate among workers a debilitating hostility toward revolutionary violence in the face of the triumphant violence of the bourgeoisie. Under the guise of a struggle against militarism, a struggle is thus being conducted against the ideas of revolution.

If after the experience of the war and all the subsequent events, especially in Russia and Germany, the prejudices of humanitarian pacifism have still survived in the Communist Party; and if the party finds it advisable for the sake of completely liquidating these prejudices to open a discussion on this question, even in that case, the pacifists with their prejudices cannot come forward in such a discussion as an equal force but must be severely condemned by the authoritative voice of the party, in the name of its Central Committee. After the Central Committee decides that the discussion has been exhausted, all attempts to spread the debilitating ideas of Tolstoyanism and other varieties of pacifism must unquestionably bring expulsion from the party.

36) An objection might, however, be raised that so long as the work of cleansing the party of ancient prejudices and of attaining internal cohesion remains uncompleted, it would be dangerous to place the party in situations where it would come into close proximity with reformists and nationalists. But such a point of view is false. Naturally it is undeniable that a transition from broad propagandist activity to direct participation in the mass movement carries with it new difficulties and therefore dangers for the Communist Party. But it is completely wrong to suppose that the party can be prepared for all tests without directly participating in struggles, without directly coming in contact with enemies and adversaries. On the contrary, only in this way can a genuine, non-fictitious internal cleaning and fusing of the party be achieved. It is quite possible that some elements in the party and in the trade-union bureaucracy will feel themselves drawn more closely to the reformists, from whom they have accidentally split than toward us. The loss of such camp-followers will not be a liability but an asset, and it will be compensated a hundredfold by the influx of those working men and women who still follow the reformists today. The party will in consequence become more homogeneous, more resolute and more proletarian.

#### VI) Party Tasks in the Trade-Union Movement

37) Absolute clarity on the trade-union question is a task of first-rate importance, surpassing by far all the other tasks before the Communist Party of France.

Naturally the legend spread by the reformists that Plans are afoot to subordinate the trade unions organizationally to the party must be unconditionally denounced and exposed. Trade unions embrace workers of different political shadings as well as non-party men, atheists as well as believers, whereas the party unites political co-thinkers on the basis of a definite program. The party has not and cannot have any instrumentalities and methods for subjecting the trade unions to itself from the outside.

The party can gain influence in the life of the trade unions

only to the extent that its members work in the trade unions and carry out the party point of view there. The influence of party members in the trade unions naturally depends on their numerical strength and especially on the degree to which they are able to apply party principles correctly, consistently and expediently to the needs of the trade-union movement.

The party has the right and the duty to aim to conquer, along the road above outlined, the decisive influence in the trade-union organization. It can achieve this goal only provided the work of the Communists in the trade unions is wholly and exclusively harmonized with the principles of the party and is invariably conducted under its control.

38) The minds of all Communists must therefore be completely purged of reformist prejudices, in accordance with which the party is regarded as a political parliamentary organization of the proletariat, and nothing more. The Communist Party is the organization of the proletarian vanguard for the ideological fructification of the labour movement and the assumption of leadership in all spheres - first and foremost in the trade unions. While the trade unions are not subordinate to the party but wholly autonomous organizations, the Communists inside the trade unions, on the other hand, cannot pretend to any kind of autonomy in their trade-union activity but must act as the transmitters of their party's program and tactics. To be most severely condemned is the conduct of those Communists who not only fail to fight inside the trade unions for the influence of party ideas but actually counteract such a struggle in the name of a principle of "autonomy" which they apply absolutely falsely. As a matter of fact, they thus pave the way for the decisive influence in the trade unions of individuals, groups and cliques, bound neither by a definite program nor by party organization, and who utilize the formlessness of ideological groupings and relations in order to keep the organizational apparatus in their own hands and secure the independence of their own clique from any actual control by the workers' vanguard.

While the party, in its activity inside the trade unions, must show the greatest attentiveness and caution toward the non-party masses and their conscientious and honest representatives; while the party must, on the basis of joint work, systematically and tactically draw closer to the best elements of the trade-union movement - including the revolutionary anarchists who are capable of learning - the party can, on the contrary, no longer tolerate in its midst those pseudo-Communists who utilize the status of party membership only in order all the more confidently to promote anti-party influences in the trade unions.

39) The party through its own press, through its own propagandists and its members in the trade unions must submit to constant and systematic criticism the shortcomings of revolutionary syndicalism for solving the basic tasks of the proletariat. The party must tirelessly and persistently criticize the weak theoretical and practical sides of syndicalism, explaining at the same time to its best elements that the only correct road for securing the revolutionary influence on the trade unions and on the labour movement as a whole is the entry of revolutionary syndicalists into the Communist Party: their participation in working out all the basic questions of the movement, in drawing the balance sheet of experience, in defining new tasks, in cleansing the Communist Party itself and strengthening its ties with the working masses.

40) It is absolutely indispensable to take a census of all the members of the French Communist Party in order to determine their social status (workers, civil employees, peasants, intellectuals, etc.); their relations with the trade-union movement (do they belong to trade unions - do they participate in meetings of Communist and revolutionary syndicalists? do they carry out at these meetings the decisions of the party on the trade unions? etc.); their attitude toward the party press (what party publications do

they read?), and so on.

The census must be so conducted that its chief aspects can be taken into account before the Fourth World Congress convenes.

March 2, 1922

#### Notes

1. These Theses on the United Front, unquestionably one of the most important programmatic documents of revolutionary Marxism, were drafted by Trotsky for the enlarged Plenum of the ECCI which convened toward the end of February 1922.
2. Le Populaire, founded by Leon Blum, was, as it remained, the central publication of the French Socialist Party.
3. The CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail - General Confederation of Labor) was the central trade union

organization of France. Formed in 1903 it embraced all the existing trade unions. Prior to World War I the CGT was the most revolutionary organization in France. But with the outbreak of war in 1914, the majority of the leaders, headed by Jouhaux, became rabid jingoists. The official CGT leadership savagely opposed the growing left wing movement, which grew rapidly after the war and came under Communist influence. They engineered a split which led early in 1922 to the formation of the Unitarian General Confederation of Labor (Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire or CGTU). This split was marked by a sharp decline in total union membership. In 1920 there were about 2,500,000 workers in the CGT. By 1923 the combined memberships of the CGT and CGTU fell under 100,000.

4. La Ligue Civique was a bourgeois anti-labor, strikebreaking organization in France. The closest counterpart to it in the US would be the National Association of Manufacturers.