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Guy A. Aldred

TOWARDS THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION?

WHITHER THE I.L.P.?

Concerning the Questions of Unity, Struggle,
and The Coming Social Revolution,
as stated in correspondence between
the I.L.P. and Guy A. Aldred.



With an appendix summarising the view of Trotsky on the future
of the I.L.P. and its place in the revolutionary struggle.



GUY A. ALDRED

GLASGOW

1934

*"I am the unconquered and the unconquerable enemy.
The grave will silence me...but my writings will
light a fire that will destroy reaction."*

Guy A. Aldred

1886 — 1963

GUY ALDRED'S LETTERS.

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TO GUY ALDRED.

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Foreword

The following pamphlet consists of letters that have passed between myself and various officers of the I.L.P. arising out of my proposal to become a member of that Party. It is unfortunate that, at the time of going to press, I have mislaid the letters that passed between myself and the S.P.G.B. in 1906. They were published in the *Socialist Standard*, and would make a worthy appendix.

I have no need to add any comment to the correspondence. I direct attention to the appendices, discussing the part to be played by the I.L.P. in the development of revolutionary Socialism in Great Britain. Time will prove whether Trotsky's view of that part is correct or not.

GUY A. ALDRED.
February 14th, 1934.

LETTER 1.

145 QUEEN STREET,
GLASGOW, G1,
January 15th, 1934.

THE EDITOR, *New Leader*,
LONDON, E.C.4.

DEAR COMRADE,

I was present on Saturday, as a visitor, at the Scottish Divisional Conference of the I.L.P. I was much impressed by the tone of the discussion and democracy of the meeting. The conference, in these days of reaction, was an inspiration. I have followed closely your discussions with the Comintern and find myself very much in sympathy with the I.L.P. attitude. My view is that the Third International has broken down and that a Fourth International is premature.* Actually whilst experimenting towards an international approach, our business, fundamentally, is to build up a revolutionary Socialist movement in Britain. As you know, my attitude, since 1906, has been that of an anti-Parliamentarian Communist, and I believe still that the social revolution will be inaugurated outside of Parliament. I see no reason whatever to change my theoretical attitude in this matter. I am compelled, however, to face the facts of the present situation. It is obvious that no anti-Parliamentary movement exists in the country and that Fascism grows daily: a greater menace. Under these circumstances, it is imperative to build, to the best of our ability, a united revolutionary movement. Even if we fail and even if the reaction triumphs for a time, the revolution will still come. But it is best to arrest the reaction and to defeat it in advance. The question is how can we do this? Parliamentarism versus anti-Parliamentarism is not the immediate issue. Socialism versus Capitalism is. In any case a minority of anti-Parliamentarians, functioning as a church or sect and largely unorganised and inarticulate, cannot impose their policy on the working-class. Such action must be either the product of some crisis and so arise spontaneously or else be the result of the considered decision, of the mass of the workers.

Carefully considering the issue, I believe it is futile to remain aloof from my fellow Socialists who are seeking the revolution as eagerly as I am. Since I do not approve of Stalinism, and since I decline to view Trotsky and other exiled or imprisoned Russian Socialists as traitors, I have no intention of approaching the Communist Party of Great Britain. In any case this party subordinates the interests of the struggle here to those of the Soviet bureaucracy in Russia. In the past I have criticised the I.L.P., but the I.L.P. to-day has taken on a new form and is functioning obviously as a transitional organisation for the creation of the living Socialist movement in Great Britain. I believe its task is to usher that movement into existence.

I have before me this choice. Either I must remain a strict anti-Parliamentarian, practically futile in my activity because standing apart from my fellow Socialists in the struggle, or I must pool my abilities and help to build a genuine all-in revolutionary movement, that in the course of the struggle shall constantly consider and reconsider questions of tactics. I have decided on the latter course. Having done so, it seems to me that the only national party in the country capable of organising the working class forces in the country in this direction is the I.L.P.

I am addressing this letter to you in the hope that you will publish it in the current issue of the *New Leader*.

It is a very important decision that I have come to, (and I hope that in the interests

of Socialism it is the right and useful one. I shall send a copy of this letter to the General Secretary of the Party in Scotland with a request for a membership form.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

* See Appendix and later letter to the Townhead I.L.P. As defined by Trotsky, the Fourth International Movement is not premature. - G.A.A.

LETTER 2.

January 15th, 1934

THE GENERAL SECRETARY,
GLASGOW I.L.P. FEDERATION.

DEAR COMRADE,
I have to-day sent the enclosed letter to the *New Leader*.

Actually, I live in the Woodside Ward, but I should prefer to join either the Exchange or the Townhead Branch. Perhaps you would send me a membership form and conditions, and I can decide that during the week.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

LETTER 3.

HEADLAND HOUSE,
308 GRAY'S INN ROAD,
LONDON WC1
24th January, 1934.

DEAR GUY ALDRED,
I have received your admirable letter and I am glad to note its contents. I am afraid it is completely impossible to print it in full in the *New Leader*, and even the summary which I have made has had to be held over. I let you know this because I don't want you to feel that we have ignored it.

Yours fraternally,
A. FENNER BROCKWAY.

LETTER 4.

January 26th, 1934.

DEAR FENNER BROCKWAY,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of the 24th *inst.* I thank you for same. So long as my letter is summarised fairly, and the point is made clear that I consider we must have a powerful Socialist united movement rebuilt to resist Capitalist-Fascism, whilst personally I remain convinced of the accuracy of my anti-Parliamentarian conceptions, I shall be satisfied. What we need to-day is a Socialist movement. We must have one powerful proletarian army and nation, whether Parliamentary or anti-Parliamentary in its immediate approach. The C.P., tied to Stalinism and Russian interests, and more and more bound up with Capitalist diplomacy, is not the centre of such unity. What remains?

I see nothing but the I.L.P. for the anti-Parliamentary and Anarchist groupings of other days are finished.

I enclose the copy each of No. 1 and 2 of the sheet I issue here. I take the view most distinctly that Van der Lubbe was a proletarian Communist and that the entire propaganda conducted in all countries by the Comintern, and most distinctly in Britain, by Lord Marley and his associates, constitutes a foul slander of a genuine working man Socialist. It seems to me that this is another phase of the C.P. attempt to cover up its colossal failures of the post-revolutionary years.

Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED.

LETTER 5.

February 1st, 1934

THE SECRETARY,
TOWNHEAD BRANCH, I.L.P.

DEAR COMRADE,

Since January 15th last, correspondence has passed between Fenner Brockway and myself with reference to the question of my linking up with the I.L.P. I understand that that correspondence is likely to be summarised in the columns of the *New Leader*. To make my position clear I enclose a copy of the letter I addressed to Fenner Brockway on January 15th last. I will not trouble you with my second letter to him as that will be covered in the present letter to you. I make formal application for membership of your branch, and in doing so, state my reasons for this action.

As you know, since 1906 I have been an active member of the anti-Parliamentary Communist movement. I believe that movement to be dead, and I do not think that it can ever be revived in its old form. I believe its work was valuable and that its thought must be embodied in the coming proletarian struggle.

It is in order to realise this practical development of my earlier work that I take this step of applying for membership of your branch of the I.L.P. The situation to-day is such that I must either join up with some existing Socialist organisation, or else remain forever outside the main historic events of our time. In view of the present

position of the I.L.P., as a cockpit of warring tendencies in the movement, some comrades may think that my decision is an error. If it should prove, so, it is an error that I can repent. It seems to me that it would be a greater error to remain apart and to drift into inaction and possibly indifference.

There is also to be faced a possible criticism that persons have joined the I.L.P. in the past when it was an avowed reformist organisation, and as a condition of so doing, recanted their previous revolutionary thought. I want to make it quite clear that I do not propose to make any such recantation. I recant none of my past revolutionary thought or energy. I affirm, what I believe the members of your branch believe, that Parliament cannot transform Capitalism into Socialism, or even improve the position of the workers under the present rotting Capitalist system. My aim is to consolidate and to develop my past into an activity of extreme Socialist usefulness. To this end, I adopt and adapt Abraham Lincoln's splendid and victorious slogan of the American Civil War, the Union, the Union Free or the Union Slave, but the Union. I say the United Proletariat, the Proletariat Parliamentary, or the Proletariat anti-Parliamentary, but the Proletariat United: One Nation, One Army, One Movement.

I would direct the attention of your branch to the letter that Trotsky has addressed to a member of the I.L.P., under date of January 5th last. In the main I identify myself with that letter. Trotsky declares that the working masses must have great events, clear slogans, far-seen banners. He declares that the alliance of the I.L.P. with the Third International is a mortal error, and insists that the Communist Party has no intention of building a broad revolutionary International. He avows that the Comintern is incapable of making one step forward, that it is completely ossified, and as a revolutionary party is dead. With all this I agree, and I hold that those members of the I.L.P. who are to-day allying themselves with Moscow are burying their movement and betraying the first principles of Socialism. The persons who expect that the Third International will lead them to victory where the Second International failed, do not understand the meaning of Litvinov's diplomacy and are looking for miracles. The Third International is as rotten as the Second, and the Communist Party is no more the hope of the working class than was the old German Social Democracy. In its American treaty, and in its negotiations with Mussolini, the Soviet Government has given formal organisational acknowledgement to the process of political liquidation of the Communist International which has been going on under Stalin's rule for the past ten years. In applying for membership of your branch, therefore, I make it clear that I do so not with a view of coming to terms with the Communist Party, but, on the contrary, with the intention of coming to grips with them. They have members inside the I.L.P., and they extend fraternal greetings to the I.L.P. with no other intention than that of destroying the party. I apply for membership in no spirit of intrigue. I desire to assist in the transformation of the I.L.P. into the pioneer organisation of the mass movement of labour in this country. I desire it to be thoroughly democratic within itself and I shall accept its democratic decisions, whilst urging fearlessly my own views in discussion. I desire to see a workers' movement built, possessed of revolutionary understanding and purpose, and capable of fundamental unity.

I do not think that because the Second and the Third Internationals have passed away for all practical purposes that we must go out and proclaim a Fourth International. But I do think with Trotsky that we must uninterruptedly struggle for the preparation and building of a new International.

Automatically that becomes the Fourth. By stating that we stand for the Fourth we proclaim our opposition to the old Social Democracy and likewise to the impossible Third International, which has used its organisation in all countries to vilify the memory of a Dutch proletarian, Marinus Van der Lubbe.

It is in this spirit of revolution and of fraternity that I approach your branch for membership. If my past activity, by which I stand and which I shall maintain unrelentingly into the future, and if my statement of attitude in this letter offend you, then you will refuse, to entertain my application. On the other hand, if the

application is entertained, you may rely on my loyal fellowship and activity in your attempt to place the Socialist movement in Great Britain on a sound revolutionary basis.

With fraternal greetings,
GUY A. ALDRED

LETTER 6.

6 BALMANO STREET,
GLASGOW, C 4
7th January, 1934.

Mr. GUY ALDRED,

DEAR COMRADE,

I was pleased to receive your application for membership of our Party, together with copy of letter sent to New Leader. I understand also that you have since become a member of one of our branches.

As you are no doubt aware, during the summer season we carry out an intensive open-air propaganda campaign, and every propagandist in the Party is requested to assist in this effort to popularise the I.L.P. policy and the Socialist way out of the present crisis. I have to request, therefore, that you should associate yourself with this Party activity, and should allow your name to go on to our propagandist list.

I remain,
Yours for Socialism,
TOM TAYLOR,
Organising Secretary,
(Glasgow Federation, I.L.P.)

LETTER 7.

I.L.P., TOWNHEAD BRANCH,
8th February, 1934.

Mr. GUY A. ALDRED,

DEAR COMRADE,

Re your application dated 1st *inst.*, we have great pleasure in accepting you as a member of the Townhead Branch of the Independent Labour Party. We know that you will always uphold the Constitution of the Party, and that your long experience and widespread knowledge of the Socialist movement will make you a valuable asset to the party as a whole.

The branch meets every Tuesday at 7.45 p.m. in the hall at 71 Stirling Road.

Yours for Socialism,
DONALD J. CAMERON,
Secretary.

LETTER 8.

February 13th, 1934.

COMRADE DONALD J. CAMERON,

DEAR COMRADE,

I have received your letter of February 8th, answering my letter of the 1st *inst.*, which fully explained my attitude towards the, I.L.P. and the vexed questions of Anti-Parliamentarism and the development of a United Working Class Movement rid of sectarianism. I thank you for your letter of fellowship and wish to state that, should I be unable to be present at the branch meeting, on Tuesday first, I shall attend on Tuesday week and thereafter regularly.

I shall also publish in pamphlet form my correspondence, in connection with joining the I.L.P., together with Trotsky's articles on the question of the I.L.P. and the Fourth International.

I enclose a copy of the letter that I have sent to Comrade Tom Taylor, Organising Secretary of the Glasgow Federation of the I.L.P.

With fraternal greetings,
Yours for Socialism and the Revolution,
GUY A. ALDRED.

LETTER 9.

February 13th, 1934

COMRADE TOM TAYLOR,
Organising Secretary,
GLASGOW FEDERATION I.L.P.

DEAR COMRADE,

I have received your letter dated February 7th with reference to my membership of the I.L.P. I shall be quite pleased to have my name placed on the I.L.P. propagandist list, but it would be just as well if, before doing so, you considered the letter I addressed to the Townhead Branch on February 1st, when applying for membership.

The only snag in the way of speaking all the time, for the I.L.P. is this: I have a considerable number of essays dealing with the history of Socialism, the life of Bakunin, etc., ready for publication, a large number of which are appearing in a French translation published by my comrades in Nimes, before being published in English. It is necessary for me to run Independent Socialist meetings in order to circulate these pamphlets and to earn the return necessary to publish them. It is not only necessary that I use my pen to develop this cultural activity but it is also essential that I bring together in popular form my past studies and writings which at present are lost from the propaganda viewpoint because they are to be found in the pages of my journals, *The Herald of Revolt*, etc., all of which are out of print. I can only raise the money to get these, published and circulated to the extent that I devote some of my meetings to this definite purpose. I do not know how it may be in the future, but in the past there has not been a great appreciation of my literary work for the cause by any of the political sections of the Socialist movement. I am compelled to realise the fact, therefore, that many of the I.L.P. Branches may not wish to circulate my writings. And my intention is quite definitely not to cease from writing, but to write more vigorously than ever. On the other hand, seeing the

critical nature of the times through which we are passing, and the absolute need to create a solid Socialist movement, intellectual cross-discussions and outlooks notwithstanding, I am quite willing to place my services at the disposal of the I.L.P. Branches for an extensive propaganda. This explains, therefore, that the only limitation on these services will be created by the meetings I have already mentioned, and those that I shall conduct on behalf of the Workers' Open Forum, which I consider to be a most important clearing house of Socialist ideas and the development of Socialist unity.

I owe it to myself, as well as to the movement, to publish all the correspondence that has taken place with reference, to my joining the I.L.P. The idea is abroad that I am moved by some ambitious careerism; and since persons have done this in the past with a view to careerism and have recanted all their activities of a revolutionary character, it is absolutely essential that my attitude should be understood. If I cannot join the organisation with my revolutionary colours flying, with my attitude known clearly and understood, then I had better remain outside. I am moved by one purpose, a dual one: I wish to develop the revolutionary integrity and solidarity of the movement, and I want to create a living proletarian unity from one end of the country to the other so as to end all sectarianism, and above all lay the ghost of the famous Tooley Street Tailors.

For the sake of clarity I am enclosing a copy of the letter that I am addressing to the Townhead Branch.

With best wishes,
Yours fraternally,
GUY A. ALDRED

APPENDICES:

1. — TROTSKY'S VIEWS.

In the *New Leader* of February 17th, 1933, James Maxton described Trotsky as "THE MOST HONOURED MAN". In the text of the article, Maxton says

"Probably the man who is most honoured to-day by the various countries in the world is Leon Trotsky. No government will grant him the right to live within its boundaries except Turkey, and in the case of Turkey only in the isolation in the island of Prinkipo. This is not due to any moral defects in his character, nor to any suggestion that he is an undesirable citizen in the ordinary sense. He is recognised throughout the world as the greatest individual menace to the capitalist order, and in Soviet Russia he is feared by those at present directing the destinies of that country."

Maxton then proceeds to quote with approval Trotsky's masterly and simple summary of Marx's materialist principles. It is not proposed to quote that summary here. But I have summarised Maxton's tribute to Trotsky in order to emphasise the importance of Trotsky's opinion of the I.L.P. situation. This is developed in two articles, published in the *Militant* of New York, organ of the Communist League of America (Opposition) during September, 1933 and January, 1934. These articles should be studied by every Socialist, and are summarised here for that reason. Space does not permit them to be reprinted in full.

It does not follow that I endorse Trotsky's view in every particular. Indeed, whilst I stand for a United Socialist Movement and the definite creation of One Proletarian Army and Nation in every country federated with a United Proletarian Army and Nation in every country, I believe unrepentingly in the idea I espoused in 1906 – Anti-Parliamentarism. I am prepared to accept the democracy of the movement, to repudiate all sectarianism, and to build up a United Movement, Parliamentary or anti-Parliamentary. But I do not take seriously in such a time of transition the constitution and rules of any particular party or group. For example, in the statement of the constitution and rules of the I.L.P. as adopted at the Derby Conference, April, 1933, we are told on page 4 that the I.L.P. is prepared to operate through Workers' Councils. This is a perfectly sound idea, and to my mind the only sound idea in the entire propaganda. But the statement continues: "The I.L.P. supports the U.S.S.R., the first Workers' Republic...." The persons who endorsed this must know perfectly well that Soviet Russia, with its leading Socialists jailed or exiled, whatever it may have aimed to have been in the first days of the Revolution, is no longer a Workers Republic. How can the I.L.P. both honour Trotsky and seriously make this statement in its constitution? Such a contradiction proves that the party is in the throes of transition, and to mix metaphors, that this constitution is in the melting pot, and is not to be taken too seriously. This does not mean to say that the I.L.P. groups or branches throughout the country may not be centres of Socialist thought and even of revolutionary action. It does mean, however, that the party cannot face the crisis with a written constitution or expect proletarians in earnest to take that constitution seriously. The constitution of a Socialist body should be quite simple these days. Its aim should be the Social Revolution and nothing else. Its constitution or principles of organisation should merely define the simple principles of democracy. For my part, I warn my Socialist comrades as I have done repeatedly since 1906: "SOCIALISM (OR COMMUNISM) IS THE ONLY HOPE OF THE WORKERS. PARLIAMENTARISM IS ILLUSION." The events on the continent of Europe, as I write, the events in Italy prior to the Fascist dictatorship,

the events in Germany prior to the seizure of power by the Nazis, and now the magnificent proletarian struggle in Austria, all prove that Parliamentarism is illusion. The United Proletarian Nation must renounce Parliamentarism for the direct revolutionary struggle. In the end, if it is to continue as a national organisation of the common people, every I.L.P. group must become the centre of revolutionary thought and action leading finally to the creation of a definite anti-Parliamentary movement.

I agree with Trotsky in much of his powerful criticism of the I.L.P., although Trotsky does not discard the Parliamentary weapon as a method of educational protest. I endorse entirely his statement of the case for the Fourth International. The anti-Parliamentarians prematurely proclaimed a Fourth International in 1921. The time is ripe now to inaugurate it; but it must be a body representative of the entire working class movement in every country. It must be the democracy of labour in conference. The Social Revolution cannot be created by the mere proclamation of a few theorists. The theorists play their part, but the Revolution itself must express the struggle of the masses, yesterday reformist, today semi-reformist, and tomorrow Social Revolution without hesitation and without compromise. From first to last, during this process of transition, a living democracy of struggle.

Trotsky's first article is dated by him August 28th, 1933. It is headed "WHITHER THE I.L.P.?" He declares that the latest political decisions of the National Council "show clearly that after its break with the reformists this party continues to move leftwards". He points out that this process is taking place in other countries and that it reflects a deep crisis of capitalism which is destroying reformism. He then refers to the inability of the Comintern to group around itself the revolutionary currents thus developing within the proletariat. Coming to England he describes how the C.P. made a collaboration in general and not on particular issues with the leaders of the I.L.P., whilst calling them "Left Social Fascists" and the most dangerous counter-revolutionaries. Trotsky explains "the mystery" on the ground of the bankruptcy of the Comintern in face of "the deep social crisis of British Capitalism" that "pushed the I.L.P. sharply towards the Left". He adds that this collaboration is "based on evasiveness, suppressions and ambiguities on both sides". He discusses this evasiveness in detail.

Trotsky states that the theses of the National Council explain the bloc of the Communist Party, as a step towards the United Front, and as a stage in the Creation of a Mass revolutionary party. He holds that these two arguments, mechanically placed side by side, contradict each other. The I.L.P. theses repeat that the United Front should embrace all organisations of the proletariat in so far as they wish to participate in the struggle. Trotsky says that it is impossible to build such a United Front in alliance with the Communist Party. He explains that when the Communist bureaucracy declares that reformism and Fascism are twins it criticises the reformist leaders incorrectly and if also provokes the rightful indignation of the reformist workers. The United Front cannot be built on the theory of "Social Fascism". The I.L.P. passes by the consideration of this fact in silence but it does not remove it from life. The I.L.P. refuses to define its attitude to official Communism (Stalinism) and so stops midway in its approach to the revolutionary issue. Similarly it stops midway in defining its attitude to reformism

In a striking passage, Trotsky declares that the reformists must be criticised as Conservative democrats and not as Fascists. The struggle with them must be no less irreconcilable on this account. British reformism is the main hindrance to the liberation not only of the British but also of the European proletariat. The principle task of a revolutionary party consists in freeing the working class from the influence of reformism. The error of the Comintern bureaucracy consists not in the fact that they believe in leadership of the revolutionary party — Trotsky holds, that this is entirely correct — but in the fact that it is incapable of gaining the confidence of the working masses in the daily struggle and yet demands this confidence in advance, presents ultimatims to the other organisations of the workers and denounces them because they are not willing to voluntarily hand over to the Comintern the marshall's baton. Trotsky states this is not Marxian policy but bureaucratic

sabotage. The revolution is only possible on condition that a truly Communist Party gains the firm confidence of the majority of the working class before the overthrow.

Trotsky passes to the question of the possible liquidation of the I.L.P. He traces the history of the Communist Party in Britain and he declares that if the I.L.P. is liquidated by the Communist Party within a short period, no gain will accrue to the Communist Party nor yet to the revolution. The leadership of the Comintern will only disillusion the I.L.P. members who joined the Communist party and either throw them back into the Labour Party or reduce them to indifference, whilst others will be expelled "for conciliatory attitude towards Trotskyism". The result would be the Communist Party would find itself weaker and more isolated than ever.

Trotsky declares that the I.L.P. can save the workers movement in Britain only by freeing itself from all unclarity and haziness with regard to the ways and methods of the Socialist Revolution and so becoming a truly revolutionary party of the proletariat. He recommends it to study the first four congresses of the Comintern and then to open up a frank discussion on the lessons of the last decade which was marked by the struggle between the Stalinist bureaucracy and the forces of Communist opposition. He declares that the content of this struggle was made up at a most important stage of the world revolutionary movement. The problems were not Russian, but international problems; economic and political tasks of the U.S.S.R.; problems of the Chinese Revolution; the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; methods of the United Front; problems of party democracy; the causes of the German disaster.

Trotsky next poses the international question. The I.L.P. entered into an alliance with the Communist Party without determining its international position. It broke with the Second International, and Trotsky asks, is it willing to share the fate of the already doomed Comintern? Does it want to remain in an intermediary position, which means a lapse into reformism and impotence? Or is it ready to assist in building a new International?

In conclusion, Trotsky avers that if the I.L.P. should disappear ingloriously from the scene, Socialism would suffer a new blow. This danger exists, and indeed is not far removed. Only political clarity can save the I.L.P. for the proletarian revolution.

Trotsky's second article is dated January 5th, 1934. It is in the form of a letter addressed to a member of the I.L.P. and is entitled: "FOR THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL".

He states that he has been informed that the I.L.P. membership has weakened considerably, and adds that the general tendency towards decline does not seem to him improbable. He considers that the leadership of the I.L.P. bears a considerable share of the responsibility for the weakening of the organisation before which the conditions open up a wide perspective. He shows how it is natural for a worker, barely awakening to political life, and knowing nothing of programmes or tactics, to join the Labour Party. He shows how it is natural for a worker, disillusioned with the reformism and exasperated with the betrayals of the Labour Party, to join the Communist Party, because he sees behind it the image of the Soviet Union. But where is the worker who will join the I.L.P.? And why should he take this step? The I.L.P. leaders can give no clear answer to this cardinal question. Trotsky adds that the working classes are not interested in political shadings. They want great events, clear slogans, far-seen banners. With regret he confesses that the I.L.P. has no banner.

Trotsky congratulates the I.L.P. on the correctness of its break with the Labour Party, but declares that the break with reformism necessitates that it should take its stand for revolutionary action. He draws a distinction, with which I do not agree, between the "Leninist method of the United Front" and the Stalinist theory of "political fraternisation with reformists". He then concluded that the causes for the enfeeblement of the I.L.P. are seen with clarity and precision when the problem is approached from the international viewpoint. The I.L.P. broke with the Second International and approached the Third but did not join it. It is simply hanging in the air at a time when every thinking worker wants to belong to a party that occupies a definite international position, and desires an unbreakable union with co-thinkers of other countries. At the Paris Conference the I.L.P. delegate said that they had not lost hope of attracting the Comintern to participate in the building of a broad revolutionary International. How long do the leading comrades of the I.L.P. need to understand that the Comintern is incapable of making one step forward, that it is completely ossified, and as a revolutionary party, is dead? To live in hopes of the Comintern is to believe in miracles, and above all to lose the confidence of the working class. The I.L.P. declines to make a decision on the international question from fear of making an error. To abstain from decision is the greatest error. Expectation and evasiveness are not the highest wisdom.

Trotsky defines the attitude of the I.L.P. as a request not to hurry with the Fourth International as the time is not ripe. He replies that not to hurry means to lose time. It is not a matter of bureaucratically proclaiming the new International, but of uninterruptedly struggling for its preparation and building. This policy of delay which seems so very realistic is the worst type of Utopianism, spun out of passivity and belief in miracles. The business of the advance guard of the proletariat is to illuminate theoretically the march of events and to foresee its future stages. The formless, passive longing for "unity" will receive blow after blow as the struggle develops. The rottenness of the Second and Third Internationals will be revealed at each step. Events will confirm *our* prognosis and *our* slogans. But we must not be afraid to unfurl our banner *now*.

Trotsky proceeds to quote with approval Lassalle, who used to say that a revolutionary needs the "physical power of thought". Although no admirer of Lassalle, Lenin was given to repeating these words. The physical power of thought consists in analysing the situation and perspectives to the very end, and having come to the necessary practical conclusion, to defend them with conviction, courage, intransigence. Trotsky concludes his letter with this sentence:

"The I.L.P. of Great Britain must place itself right now under the banner of the Fourth International, or it will disappear from the scene without leaving a trace."

2. — THE AUSTRIAN LESSON.

The magnificent stand of the Austrian Social Democrats, like that of the Spanish Anarchists, gives point to Trotsky's plea for rank-and-file solidarity and understanding published in his article in *The New Republic*, for July, 1933, on the "German Catastrophe". He shows that the interests of Social Democracy, whatever its crimes and follies, are not compatible with those of Fascism. Does not Austria prove the truth of his words? This means that if the Communists had not fought and

denounced the Social Democrats even more than they did the Hitlerites, the latter would never have risen to power and then crushed both parties. The "Communists" cherished the naive belief that you can denounce a man or group of men as traitors and can accuse them of every crime in the calendar one day, and that they will then rush into your arms and greet you as comrades the next. Being in exile has helped Trotsky tremendously, and he has become the most powerful contemporary Socialist writer in the world. The Stalinists will not read him because he is a "traitor." They will continue therefore to make the same blunders and play into the hands of their enemies, actually betraying the workers to disaster, all the while pluming themselves on being the only real revolutionists. The seeming reformists and the genuine revolutionists alike, the crisis there, will fight to the death for the people's cause.

3. — TROTSKYISTS AND THE I.L.P.

The *New Leader*, in its issue for February 16, 1934, published the announcement that a group of members of the Communist League (Trotsky supporters) had written the National Council of the I.L.P. expressing a desire to join the Party.

"If given permission to do so," they wrote, "we enter with the sincere intention of participating in all possible Party's activities. While doing so we wish to retain the right, as other members of the I.L.P., of comradely criticism and the right to fight and propagate (within the limits of the Party Constitution and discipline) our opinions, in particular the necessity for the I.L.P. helping to build up the Fourth International."

The National Council instructed the Secretary to reply that an organised group could not be admitted to the Party to advocate a particular policy, but that those who belong to it were entitled to apply for branch membership as individuals. If they accepted the Constitution of the Party they were entitled to exercise the rights of all I.L.P. members to advocate within the Party changes of policy in line with the principles and Constitution of the Party.

My comment is this: the advice to the Trotskyists reminds me of Lord Skerrington's remarks to my colleagues in the dock at my Glasgow trial for sedition in 1921. He said I could not defend them, but that they could say: "Guy Aldred has stated my defence". He added that that came to the same thing. As to the I.L.P. Constitution, does the N.A.C. seriously defend its complete integrity during a period of transition when they have invited revolutionists to join the Party? This is like expecting to make omelettes without breaking egg-shells, or asking an earthquake to respect furniture bought on the hire-purchase system because of the hire. Parties do not matter. Their locals, as centres of real live men and women, do. Where is the point of a Parliamentary concept of organisation at a time of crisis, when joyous, spontaneous coming together in solidarity is essential? Parliamentary Constitutionalisms are dead, but Democracy is alive.

4. — TOWNHEAD I.L.P.'s LAST WORD.

After this pamphlet was sent to press, I received the following communication from D. J. Lenaghan, Propaganda Secretary, Townhead I.L.P. It may be taken as the final answer to my letters of February 1st and 13th:

15/2/34.

Comrade Guy A. Aldred.

Dear Comrade,

I am pleased to remind you that you are one of our speakers on Sunday night first, 18th inst., in St. James Picture House. Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours fraternally,
D. J. LENAGHAN.

I accepted the invitation, and for the first time in Glasgow, defended *on an indoor platform* the deeds and memory of Marinus Van der Lubbe, proletarian, direct actionist and revolutionist, against the slanders of parliamentary "Socialists" and "Communists," and their ally, Lord Marley!
