

Leon Trotsky: Letter to Leon Sedov

30 October 1931

[My own translation of the French translation. Corrections by English native speakers would be extremely welcome]

My dear Lyova,

It is only today that I have been able to read your article. It is good and will undoubtedly be very useful. Frankel is very pleased with it. There is one place where the wording does not seem precise enough to me, and that is when it is said that in Germany the differentiation between right and left is so clear-cut that it leaves little room for our shadows. This formulation can give rise to criticism. The shadows that disappear in any marked differentiation are not vital. In fact, the situation could be better characterised by saying: because of the false policy of the CI, the acute crisis has largely spilled over to the party and consequently to the working class. The differentiation is not only acute, but also to the highest degree "sketchy", chaotic, politically unorganised. It is precisely because Marxist cadres have not been formed in time that the elaboration of questions of strategy and tactics does not advance as much as this sketchy ("spontaneous" as we say in Russia) differentiation. We foresee and analyse the perspective, in a word, we conduct a long-term policy. In posing the question, it is essential to establish events empirically; but today the apparatus prevents the process of differentiation from being fertilised by our ideas. This is a unique situation, produced by the past of the CP in its entirety. But we are not at all a "nuance" next to the others in the CI. We are a Marxist forecast, a Marxist policy, opposed to spontaneous differentiation and bureaucratic stupidity.

The article rightly points out that it is impossible to rush to meddle in all matters great and small. I am very much afraid that the French League has taken and thus opened a wide field for the improvisations of Molinier, Treint, etc. Their organisation resolution fills me with anxiety. Write to Frank on this subject if you get a chance, but on a personal basis, not for circulation.

The secretariat seems to have asked a question of parliamentary convenience (I haven't had time to read their documents yet). Can Frank really have supported this monument to stupidity with Mill? The secretariat is by no means an accountable parliamentary cabinet headed by a Prime Minister in the form of a parliamentary secretary. The secretariat is an administrative body essentially based on delegates from national sections. The principle of democratic centralism means that the national sections can replace the people in the secretariat not only as a whole, but also supplement it, expand it, etc. The collective formulation of a vote of confidence is parliamentary jargon – and nothing more. Frank's behaviour on this question is completely incomprehensible: on the one hand, he and Molinier complain about Mill, and when you try to help them out of a cul-de-sac, they start waving their arms and legs. Please communicate this opinion of me to Frank.

These little intrigues aimed at Seipold, regardless of what he is, seem to me to be quite wrong. He

still has several months left as a deputy. This time he must be used as a parliamentarian by obliging him to make two or three programmatic speeches. At the moment, he has to make a speech about the united front with the communist and social democratic workers against fascism and how only traitors and good-for-nothings in the working class can talk about giving fascism a chance to come to power without fighting. If there is a possibility to make such a speech, I will make a draft of it.

After the dissolution of the Prussian Landtag, Seipold will have to fall in line, and the question concerning him will lose its importance. But at this very moment, when he is in an exceptionally responsible position, only petty bureaucrats can push things with him to the point of splitting without even thinking of the consequences: Seipold cannot be re-educated, no matter what. He is no longer young, and he is ill; we must take him as he is. Politically he is fully with us and that is enough. Grylewicz and others must be firmly straightened out on this issue and it is vital that you redouble your understanding with Seipold as he also complains about you. I repeat, it is a matter of a few months and we must adapt our policy to him.

I have had a letter from Erwin on French affairs, showing that he knows how to observe, think and formulate. He is undoubtedly a good man. Among other things, he writes that he has not yet received my dialogue "on dual power" etc.

Why has it not been sent to him? It should be sent to the secretariat and to the French and printed for the Germans in the Internal Bulletin or in the "Permanente".