

Our Appeal to the Party Members

The regime of bureaucratic strangulation which expels its outspoken opponents and bludgeons the Party into silence has become an international phenomenon of the period. This is the only key to an understanding of its absolutely unprecedented excesses. A real struggle against it cannot be made without an understanding of its International scope. On this, as well as on the other principle questions, the fight of the proletarian-Communist elements in all Parties unites with the Bolshevik fight of the Russian Opposition under the leadership of Trotsky.

At the XIV Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Stalin issued a warning against the course he later adopted, and predicted its disruptive consequences. He defended there the refusal to expel Trotsky from the Political Bureau and said, "We are against the policy of lopping off, of blood-letting (it was blood they wanted). It is a dangerous thing. One day you lop off this limb. Tomorrow another on the next day a third. And after a while what becomes of the Party?"

Stalin forgot these words so full of prophetic significance. He formed a factional combination with the right wing to suppress and expel the left, the Opposition. He gave the signal for the same line in all the Parties of the Comintern. As a result in the recent years we have seen everywhere a strengthening of the opportunist elements, an enormous development and entrenchment of bureaucraticism and wholesale expulsions of the proletarian left—the core of the workers' vanguard. All the little Stalins in all the Parties are bolstering themselves up by these means.

THE DE-PROLETARIANIZATION OF THE PARTY

This meeting of the Central Executive Committee has an unusually large attendance which has been gathered together to applaud our expulsion. The composition of the audience is also symptomatic. Of the two hundred or more in the hall, almost every one is a functionary or employee of the Party or of an organization or institution closely related to the Party. There are not half a dozen workers from the shops present. The opportunist leaders of the needle trades are here but the rank and file Communists, who fight for Communist policies against them, are barred out. The fiction of "proletarian representation" was never more clearly exposed than it is by these simple facts. All this is in correlation to the shifting class composition of the upper circles of the Party.

The wholesale expulsion of proletarian fighters goes hand in hand with the steady recruitment of all kinds of dubious petty-bourgeois careerist and half-baked intellectual elements. The class composition of the Party, particularly in the New York District, has been seriously affected by this process in recent years and has had a direct expression in the opportunistic policies of the Party and the strengthening of the opportunist elements generally.

In the upper circles of the Party, in the Party apparatus, this increased proportion of non-proletarians is enormously expanded. Under the Lovestone regime these elements are appearing more and more on all sides as Party representatives, officials, managers, directors, teachers, supervisors. Coming to these positions without sufficient prerequisites, they bring with them the detestable careerist attributes of insolence, arrogance and pride of office, antagonizing and alienating the worker elements and thrusting them aside.

The "education" dispensed in the Party school under such auspices is becoming a distorted caricature of revolutionary training. It is led almost exclusively by school teachers, dentists, "professors", journalists—everything except proletarian leaders tested by the class struggle.

The Party must examine this question in direct connection with the struggle against the Right danger and the opportunist leaders who are its bearer. It is necessary at once to take a complete registration of the Party membership with the object of precisely determining its class composition. A reorganization of the Party apparatus from top to bottom, up to and including the Central Executive Committee, placing the overwhelming majority of the positions in the hands of experienced and tested Party workers of proletarian origin, must be effected at once. For the next period, until a proletarian stabilization has been achieved in the Party and its apparatus, the Party membership must be closed entirely to non-proletarian elements. Even then their admittance to the Party must be carefully restricted and supervised.

The failure of the Party to grow in the favorable objective circumstances, the defeats it has suffered where victories were possible, its poor showing in the election with the field to itself as the Party of the class struggle, the collapse of its trade union work, etc., are due primarily to the false leadership. Official bombast and factional trickery can no longer obscure or hide these condemning facts. The fight for the Party is a fight against the systematic opportunist policy of the leadership and the bureaucratic regime with which it fortifies itself against control and correction from below. This internal regime is tied up with the external opportunistic line and is an expression of it. A serious struggle for a correction of the opportunist external policy which weakens the Party and consequently the class before their enemies is impossible without the most determined, stubborn and relentless fight for Party democracy. Party democracy is the means whereby the policy of the Party can be corrected and its leadership reorganized on a proletarian-Communist basis.

The raising of the issue of Party democracy and the education of the Party membership on its meaning and significance are made all the more necessary by the confusion that prevails on the whole question of Party government, of forms of working class organization, of centralization and discipline, which prevails. This confusion is fostered by the monstrous distortions of Lenin's teachings disseminated by the Party leadership and is the direct result of them.

The 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, held under Lenin's leadership at the end of the Civil War, said: "The form of organization and the methods of work are entirely determined by the specific character of the given historic situation and the problems which arise directly out of that situation."

THE ISSUE OF THE PARTY DEMOCRACY

The resolution of the 10th Congress said further: "The needs of the current movement demand a new organization form. That form is Workers' Democracy." We do not advocate the mechanical adoption of the forms and methods prescribed by Lenin for the Russian Party which works under vastly different conditions from ours. But if Workers' Democracy could be proclaimed by Lenin for the Russian Party, with the responsibility of the Proletarian Dictatorship on its shoulders, then it is a hundred times more applicable to our Party under the given historic circumstances in America.

The present leaders and teachers of the Party distort and misapply all these conceptions. They substitute the idea of discipline in the formal mechanical sense for the Leninist doctrine of democratic centralism. Our Party which ought to be the champion of Workers' Democracy throughout the entire labor movement is making the very word taboo. All democracy is indiscriminately labeled bourgeois democracy. This false and thoroughly reactionary idea is heard on all sides, and Comrade Weinstone, who has become the full-blown type of Party martinet, has made an interjection here to the same effect. Party democracy, of course, does not exclude, but presupposes centralization and discipline. It is just the bureaucratic distortions and mechanical conceptions of discipline which give rise to syndicalist prejudices in this respect.

The Party must make an end of this by struggle against the leadership that fosters and expresses it. The first step is the breaking down of the disruptive expulsion policy and the reinstatement of the expelled Communists with the right to express their views in the Party by normal means. The policy of administrative gagging, suppression and terrorism must be overthrown. The worker Communist must be able to feel at home in his own Party. He must have the right and feel the freedom to open his mouth and say what he thinks without being called into the office of some petty official or other, like a recalcitrant workman in a factory, and threatened with discipline. All talk of Party democracy in the face of suppression on all sides and the wholesale expulsion of comrades for their views is a swindle.

The Party needs a real and free discussion. The suppressed documents of the Russian Opposition, dealing with the vital world problems of the period, must be printed and made available for the Party members. The Party must have the right to discuss the questions upon which there are differences and not merely those upon which there is general agreement. The Party must discuss the International

questions and not merely the National and local ones. The Party must have the right to discuss the questions confronting the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in order to participate intelligently in their solution. The Party members must have the right to discuss ALL the questions of the Comintern since they are part of the Comintern and should not regard it as an institution standing apart from them and making decisions without their participation.

There is one feature of the proceedings against us which give them a tragicomic aspect. We see sitting here, ready to raise their hands to expel us, not a few comrades who exercised this privilege once before. Olgin, Trachtenberg, Kruse and others raised their hands just as high to expel us Communists, us defenders of the Russian Revolution, us followers of Lenin and Trotsky, from the Socialist Party in 1919. Then as now they did not spare slander and vituperation in the process. We were also in those days called "renegades", "agents of the capitalists" and even "spies" and "provocateurs". It was not we but they who had to repent the actions and swallow the words. We survived all that—the expulsions and the slander—because we were Communists and we will survive it now for the same reason.

THE BASIS OF PARTY UNITY

We live and struggle in "the epoch of wars and revolutions" when the events of days and weeks transcend in their magnitude and importance the events of years and decades of other times. We Communists, who are the standard-bearers of the interests of the proletariat and the fighters for the future of humanity, cannot for a moment forget the immensity of our historic responsibilities, which are only magnified by the fewness of our numbers here in the reactionary citadel of World Imperialism. The sharpening International complications which push us every day nearer to the verge of Imperialist war, the great and unavoidable difficulties of the Soviet Union in its Capitalist encirclement, the colossal problems and tasks confronting our Party in the class struggle—these facts are raising the question of Party unity, of the full utilization of all the tested forces, in all its insistence. The burning issue of Party unity demands a solution, not on the basis of bureaucratic machinations but on the basis of Lenin's teachings.

We speak here for this unity. We declare ourselves ready to do all in our power to bring it about and make it secure, disregarding all the slander against us. We make one demand only: that we have the right to maintain our views and to defend them within the Party by Party means.

We pioneers of Communism in America standing here at the Plenum of the Central Executive Committee, fully conscious of the great solemnity of the occasion and with a full sense of responsibility for our words, say openly to the Plenum and to the entire Party: The views for which we have been expelled are Leninist views. We stand by them. As revolutionists we can do nothing else and we will continue to stand by them and work for their victory in the future. On this basis we present our appeal for the reinstatement into the Party of ourselves and the other expelled comrades who share our views.

Pepper ended his report against us with the prophecy that this will be the last time we will ever address a Party gathering. But this statement will be refuted by the facts of the future just as his other statements are refuted by the facts of the past. In the past during our entire lives we have always fought on the side of the working class when some of those who expel us, including Pepper, stood on the other side of the barricades. We will be at our posts also in the future. Let the Peppers make predictions to the contrary if they wish. It is not we revolutionists with unsullied records who will be discredited thereby. For such talk of the future only invites a recollection of their own dishonorable past which discredits them.

The Party needs the scores of loyal and tested Communists who are being expelled today and cannot spare them. The Party will make its voice heard and assert its will. The Party will call us back to our rightful places in the ranks, and will do this sooner than you dream. We say this because the platform of the Opposition represents the class interests of the Proletariat on an International scale and the Communist Party will adopt that platform. We say this because we have confidence in the proletarian ranks of the Party, in their revolutionary spirit and will. Therefore our final words at this meeting are a revolutionary salutation to the Party which we have helped to found and build and from which we have power on earth can tear us away.

A Burglary - Its Political Meaning

On Sunday evening, December 23, the residence of Rose Karsner and Jim Cannon, where the editorial work of The Militant is also conducted, was entered by burglars during the absence of the occupants.

The burglary was a professional job. Deep, de-facing marks on the door-jamb indicate that entry was effected by forcing the lock, which was a strong one, with a jimmy. It was also quite obviously timed for the occasion, as comrade Karsner had been confined to the house by illness and Sunday evening was the first time in several weeks when there was no one at home.

The following material was taken: Our letter file, account book, receipt book, editorial material, some manuscripts, bank book, partial list of subscribers to The Militant and some other material of this kind. Nothing else was taken.

The robbery subjects us to some temporary inconveniences but will not seriously disrupt our work, as we had taken the precaution to keep copies of the most important manuscripts and addresses in another place in anticipation of such an event. Its perpetrators can learn from the stolen material our meagre financial situation and lack of resources and the names of some comrades who had been in correspondence with us but who have not yet taken a definite position on the questions at issue.

That is all. There is not a line in our correspondence relating to any activities or "connections" of ours which conflict in the slightest degree with our public declarations in The Militant and no such "evidence" can be produced by the organizers of the burglary unless it is forged. On the contrary, definite and complete proof is contained in our stolen correspondence to refute every one of such accusations.

A question for Communists of far more importance than any "exposures" in the Forward style of stolen or forged material is the political significance of underworld methods in Party disputes. Four years ago when the proposal first came before the Political Committee that our party should sanction such methods in a trade union fight we took a determined stand against it in principle. We said then that the toleration of such a procedure would prove to be a frankenstein, that it would inevitably lead to the corruption of the Left wing and even of the party itself, that it would lead to giving up the ideological and political struggle for the mobilization of the masses—which is the weapon of Communism—and submitting disputes to the arbitrament of the ganster's blackjack and the burglar's jimmy—the weapons of reaction. We exaggerated the danger then, as we thought, in order to stamp out such tendencies at the very beginning. Many things have happened in the meantime.

Let the proletarian communists in the party ranks ponder over this question and ask themselves: *Who brings these absolutely unprecedented methods into factional disputes in the party? What class influence is behind them and WHERE DO THEY LEAD?*

They will search in vain for the necessary key to these questions unless they see them in their political connection. Bureaucratism, expulsions, gangsterism and burglary are not isolated phenomena. They are all bound together and they are the expression and instruments of an adventurist leadership and its opportunist political line. This leadership, lacking a proletarian class basis and outlook, lacking any experience or contact with mass movements, regarding the inner-party struggle for control of the apparatus as an adventure and an end in itself, is an absolutely artificial, unhealthy and impossible leadership for a proletarian party. It resorts to these methods alien to communism, because its regime is collapsing and it cannot maintain itself

THE MILITANT

Published twice a month by the Opposition Group in the Workers (Communist) Party of America

Address all mail to: P. O. Box 120, Madison Square Station, New York, N. Y.

Publishers address at 340 East 19th Street, New York, N. Y. — Telephone: Gramercy 3411.

Subscription rate: \$1.00 per year. Foreign, \$1.50 5c per copy Bundle rates, 3c per copy.

Editor

James P. Cannon

VOL. II.

JANUARY 1, 1929.

No. 1.

Application for entry as second class matter pending at the Post Office at New York, N. Y.

in any other way. It resorts to bureaucratic administration and to expulsion of communists because it fears control from below. It incites and organizes gangsterism and robbery because it has no principle ground. It cannot stand up in the ideological and political fight.

This leadership, corrupt, bureaucratic, and opportunist through-and-through, is driving the Party with all means and all speed to a split. The expulsion of almost 100 Communists of the Opposition is only a beginning. There are an equal number under charges. They are laying the ground for the beginning of the expulsion of the Foster group after the Convention. Clear indications of this are already to be seen in their entire pre-convention campaign and by the removals and suspensions now taking place on various pretexts.

The Pepper-Lovestone faction, leading the party to defeats in the class struggle and faced with an ever-growing revolt from below, must and will expel the entire articulate proletarian opposition. The bureaucraticism, the expulsions, the gangsterism and burglary are all parts of this process.

It is impossible to wage an effective fight against these methods without attacking the false political line which they express and with which they are bound up. And it is likewise futile to quarrel with them merely over the formulation of theses and resolutions (as the Foster group leaders do) without exposing their lack of principle, without fighting for party democracy, against bureaucraticism, corruption and underworld methods. These people have no definite principles. They can change their slogans from "Fire Against the Left" at the May Plenum to a hue and cry about the "Right Danger" at the

A National Organization Tour

In view of the action of the Party administration in expelling us from the party and in utilizing public meetings and the forums of non-party organizations to attack and misrepresent our position, we have decided to hold public meetings and to accept invitations to speak before workers' organizations in order to bring our platform before the Communist workers and sympathizers.

Comrade James P. Cannon will soon take the road on an organization tour in behalf of the Opposition and its platform which will extend as far West as Minneapolis and Kansas City and will include Cleveland, Akron, Detroit, Chicago and a number of other intervening points. Comrade Cannon will speak at public meetings on "The Truth About Trotsky and the Platform of the Opposition," and will also hold meetings with the local Opposition groups for detailed discussion of all points of our platform and tactics.

The first public meeting on this subject was held at the Labor Lyceum, New Haven, Conn., on Friday, December 21, with an audience which filled the hall. An organized group, sent by the Party leadership of the District, attempted to disturb the meeting and prevent Comrade Cannon from speaking. These tactics violently antagonized the workers who had come to hear a presentation of the position of the Russian Opposition for the first time. Comrade Cannon continued speaking for more than an hour despite continuous interruptions and disorder when a squad of police appeared, stating that a "riot call" had come to Police Headquarters. Some of those who had been attempting to disrupt the meeting tried to make it appear that we had called the police to our aid. But this "clever" trick was quickly frustrated by the announcement of Comrade Cannon to the meeting that there was absolutely no disorder, that no one responsible for the meeting had called the police and could not do so since they are all Communists who have "relations" with the police only when they are being themselves arrested and that the police were requested to withdraw and let the meeting proceed. One of the disturbers, Comrade Kling, stood up and began to explain to the Policemen in charge of the squad that we were "holding the meeting under false pretenses by using the name of the Communist Party." He was rebuked by Comrade Cannon before the audience and the Police and was told that he should not explain his grievances to policemen as though they were the arbitrators of disputes between Communists.

This brought a roar of approval from the crowd which cleared the atmosphere and restored order. The cops left and the meeting proceeded. They returned later however and broke up the meeting on the ground that we had no "permit". The audience

December Plenum, they can change from opposition to the building of new unions in April to the policy of organizing new unions overnight—and on paper—in August, without changing their fundamental position and their completely cynical attitude in either case.

It is the task of the Opposition, in the light of the recent events, to wage its fight against the Lovestone leadership more subornly and more relentlessly than before, to expose its incompetence and corruption, from all sides, sparing nobody who in one way or another is a party to it.

About 18 months ago comrade Weinstone came to us in alarm with the declaration that the corruption, opportunism and cynicism of the Lovestone group leaders was such that they would destroy the party if they secured control. He supplemented all that we knew of them by what he had learned as a member of their faction. He proposed a bloc with us and with the Foster group to secure the Party against this. In our opinion this proposal corresponded with the best interests of the party. The bloc was formed and a majority of the Central Executive Committee was secured in support of it. This majority was set aside by the Executive Committee of the Communist International on the initiative of Bukharin and the Lovestone faction was mechanically entrenched in control of the party. The fears expressed then by Weinstone were nevertheless valid and they have been confirmed a thousand times in the intervening period. Weinstone has capitulated to the "corrupt faction machine of Lovestone and Pepper" as he characterized it then and has become a henchman of it. The issue remains however and is clearer now, in all its International implications, than ever before. Those who see that issue and fight on that line as a part of the Russian and International Opposition are the true defenders of the Party and its future.

was driven from the Hall and the Police placed Comrade Cannon, who was loudly protesting and denouncing their action, under arrest, but released him after the crowd had been dispersed.

This exhibition of hooliganism has aroused the utmost indignation among the rank and file Party members and sympathizers and is condemned on all sides. They have demanded another meeting for Comrade Cannon and it will be held at the Labor Lyceum on Friday, January 4.

The second public meeting of the Opposition was held in Philadelphia at Boslover Hall, Thursday, Dec. 27, with Comrade Shachtman as speaker. Profiting by the New Haven experience a strong workers' guard was on hand to protect the meeting and it was held without interference of any kind. Comrade Shachtman spoke for two and one half hours and answered questions for another hour, to the satisfaction and approval of the crowd.

The third public meeting will be held in New York City on Tuesday, January 8, at the Labor Temple, 14th Street and Second Avenue.

Our First Pamphlet!

THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

A Criticism of Fundamentals

By
L. D. TROTSKY
With an Introduction by James P. Cannon
READY SOON
25 cents per Copy
In lots of 5 or more 18 cents per Copy
Order now from
THE MILITANT
Box 120, Madison Square Station
New York City.

CIRCULATE

THE MILITANT

Subscribe to The Militant and order a bundle.

SUBSCRIPTION BLANK

Enclosed find One Dollar for one year's subscription to The Militant.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY