

# Next Steps in the Struggle

Material for the National Conference Discussion

**I**t is now more than 5 months since our declaration in support of the Russian Opposition, made on the occasion of our return from the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, was answered by expulsion from the Party. The period which has intervened since that time has seen a steady development of the work of popularizing the main ideas of the Opposition, a task which has been carried on in the face of a campaign of falsification and incitement reminiscent of Palmer's days and having not a little of the same essential content.

There could be no better testimony to the revolutionary impulses in the Party ranks than the fact that the revolutionary platform of the Opposition was able in so short a time to make its way through the "cordon sanitaire" of corrupted bureaucracy and to find supporters in every section of the Party, in all parts of the country, who stood up in defense of that platform even to the point of expulsion from the Party. These are the vanguard fighters for the Communist ideal and the living proof of its vitality. Their firm union on a national scale and their collective preparation for the next stages of the struggle now stand on the order of the day. The National Conference of the Opposition, which will convene in Chicago on May 17th, will be devoted to these tasks. The thoughts of the most reliable and tested militants of American Communism are turning to the forthcoming Conference which is fraught with such a great significance for the future.

The Conference will sharpen the line of our struggle and work out the organization forms for the next stage of its development. The action of the Convention in rejecting our appeal and denying us the right to be heard, will naturally have no influence in halting this determination. The Convention, which was packed and prearranged by the mechanical exclusion of the Opposition, accomplished nothing whatever except to demonstrate again the bankruptcy of the regime. Formal decisions arrived at in this way cannot be taken as a substitution for conclusions based on free collective work of revolutionaries.

The question has been asked by timid people in the Party ranks whether the action of the Convention, which was inspired and is fully supported by the Stalin leadership in the Comintern, will prompt the Opposition to give up the struggle and return to the Party on the terms implied in the present policy toward the Opposition on an International scale. It is a significant feature of the Opposition movement that not a single voice in favor of this has been heard in its ranks. Despite the difficult circumstances under which we conduct our work, or perhaps because of them, the determination to carry on the fight to a victorious conclusion, no matter how long it takes nor how hard the road, has been voiced on every side. We are confident that the National Conference will confirm this attitude unanimously.

There has been much speculation in the circles of the party bureaucracy on the appearance of a "Zinoviev" tendency, that is, a tendency toward capitulation, toward treason to principle, in the ranks of the Opposition. Such things are, of course, possible on the part of individuals, but we do not believe they will be seen. The nature of the campaign against us was not without its positive side in our favor. The fact that expulsion and unprecedented calumny had to be faced by every Party member coming out for our platform

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By James P. Cannon

restrained those afflicted with weak knees and faint hearts from joining our struggle. Those who passed to our side through this selective process only grew firmer in their convictions and stronger in their confidence under the pressure on us.

The experience of the International Opposition has not been in vain. The nature of the struggle is so clear now that Zinovievs, Fishers and Maslows can no longer be attracted to it. It will be the duty of the Conference to sum up this International experience and to say that capitulationist tendencies are a foreign substance in the movement of the Communist Opposition which must be cast aside in the most ruthless fashion at their first appearance.

Capitulation on the terms of the bureaucratic destroyers of the Communist International means to give up participation in intellectual and political life at a time when the movement stands most in need of this participation by all the creative forces. It means to become a silent partner in the criminal destruction of the Russian Revolution and the Communist International. It means treason to Communism and to the cause of the working class.

We have no doubt that the Conference will estimate the question in this way and give a revolutionary answer to it. In doing so it will have to go beneath the surface and attack the germs of this disease which present themselves in the form of "ultra-legalism" in the struggle for our views. This is the "advice" frequently given to us by "sympathizers" of our cause who think it sufficient to hold views in secret and do nothing to advance them because it is prohibited by the bureaucrats. This "advice" must be specifically and categorically rejected by the Conference as it has been in all of our activities since the expulsions began. The movement of the International Communist Opposition is a fighting movement and it will triumph by struggle. We can agree to give up extraordinary methods and organization in this struggle only when our Party rights and the Party rights of all our comrades throughout the International are restored.

While confirming the fighting methods we have employed in the Communist struggle for our views and working out the organization forms for their intensification and further development, the Conference will also have to answer the question of a new Party. This tendency, the antipode of capitulationism, has a superficial attractiveness. It could be seriously entertained by the Opposition, however, only if it had become clear that the Communist International, of which our Party is a part, had definitely left the proletarian path. This is by no means the case. The bureaucratization and opportunist politics of its upper stratum are the objects of our attack.

The Comintern possesses enormous revolutionary resources in its proletarian ranks which are beginning to assemble and take shape. The Opposition must continue to base itself on them. Our policy will become the policy of the proletarian forces of the Comintern if the correct tactics in furtherance of it are employed. A split in the Comintern is the aim of the Stalinist bureaucrats. The unification of the Comintern on the basis of Leninism, against the bureaucrats and opportunists, is the slogan of the Opposition. With this slogan we will defeat all attempts to isolate us from the Party membership. The tactics proceeding from this slogan will be the means of helping the proletarian tendency in the Party to find the right line and march on the same path with us.

Alongside the task of penetrating ever deeper into the Party ranks with our agitation, we have the task of recruiting and organizing the revolutionary workers outside the Party who are becoming attracted to our banner in large numbers. This is a revolutionary duty of the greatest importance which the Opposition must perform. The present leadership has failed miserably in this. Among these non-Party Communists are thousands and tens of thousands who have been alienated and estranged from the Party but who remain true to the cause of communism. The problem of organizing them is not separate from the work within the Party ranks but is bound up with it. The National Conference of the Opposition must work out the organization form for this double task.

## Boston Works for a Weekly Militant Fund

The Boston group of the Communist Opposition opened its campaign for the Weekly Militant with the holding of a Vetcherinka on Sunday night, March 24th which was attended by a good crowd. A profit of \$50. was realized by the affair and contributed to the fund for the Weekly. Comrade Schlosberg, who presided, reminded the comrades of a similar gathering held during the war which had marked the launching of the Boston section of the Left Wing movement and said the same spirit which had animated the pioneers of Communism in those days was in our Opposition movement today.

The Boston group held a special meeting on Saturday, March 23rd, on the occasion of Comrade Cannon's visit to the city and decided to accept a quota of \$250. for the fund for the Weekly. The amount raised at the Vetcherinka is the first installment on this pledge.

In our last issue we remarked that reports from Kansas City and other places were "still awaited." Since then K. C. has been heard from in the form of a letter from "Shorty" Buehler, the veteran of the Communist movement there who is famous for doing things which others consider impossible.

"K. C. comrades pledge \$100," says the letter. "Enclosed find check for \$20, as a starter on the pledge. Keep up the good fight."

Al Glotzer, for the Chicago group, sends along another \$56. to apply on their pledged quota of \$500. This makes a total of \$176.50 from Chicago so far which puts it ahead of all points East, but still behind Minneapolis.

Individual responses to our circulation of collection lists are beginning to come in. L. S. Quong, a Chinese comrade who has already contributed more than five dollars through the Chicago group, sends another dollar on his own list. Charlie Byrne sends a five spot on his own account from Youngstown. Joseph Keller, of Cleveland, sends five dollars and says, "I am very glad to hear the news of the campaign for a Weekly Militant and will do my best in securing subs and money toward its maintenance. The beginning may appear slow, but there surely will be good results later."

Alex Schreiber, treasurer of the Detroit group, sends \$5.75 as the first installment and Rosa Powell sends another contribution of three dollars from Richmond California.

A collection of \$60.50 for the Weekly fund was taken at the Trotsky protest meeting held in New York on March 9th. In addition to this a number of individual contributions have been received, the largest of which is \$10. from comrade Louis Stone.

The struggle to maintain our Militant even as a semi-monthly has been a hard one which required sacrifices all around of a kind which only pioneers animated by real convictions and Communist determination are able to make. The establishment and maintenance of the Weekly will be a still harder struggle for a time, but the Opposition Militants will go through with it just the same.

The Weekly Militant must and will be realized. Amount necessary to start Weekly \$2,000.00 Previously acknowledged \$382.00 Received since last issue 180.70

Total contributions to date \$ 562.70

Balance needed \$1437.30

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# A New Dawes Plan for the Old

By Max Shachtman

**T**HE so-called Experts' Conference now meeting in Paris, in an attempt to "settle" for the nth time the question of German reparations and debt payments, has projected the most ambitious plan for American imperialist domination of Europe that has yet been presented. The plan calls for the establishment of an international debt bank for the ostensible purpose of regulating the movement of the funds created by reparations and war debts. Translated into the language of the current world financial relation of forces, the establishment of such a bank would result in the establishment of a hitherto unequalled domination of the countries of Europe especially such as the United States has never before enjoyed.

The plan becomes even clearer when it is understood that the only country at present in a position to organize and insure the maintenance of such an institution is the United States, whose enormous and dominating financial power would be immediately reflected in its control of the policies of the bank. It is not for nothing that the head of the American "unofficial" delegation to the conference is J. P. Morgan who sits in the center of the immense American financial spider web that extends over the entire capitalist world. The proposal has left the European press breathless. American finance capital is playing its cards with a sure, firm hand, and the plan it offers is another way of informing the bourgeoisie of Europe that the U. S. has every intention of pressing the knife more sharply to their throats in an attempt to put an end to the uncertainty with which the question of reparations and debt payments has hitherto been surrounded.

American domination of such a bank—and no other domination is at present conceivable—would leave the disputed questions entirely in the hands of Wall Street. The primary function of the institution, according to the announcements, would be to "act as trustee in receiving from Germany such annuities as may be arranged and disbursing these among the creditor nations. . . . It also could cooperate with and act as an essential intermediary between all the interested governments and the issuing bankers in marketing such bonds as might be issued for the commercialization of the German annuities." In other words, Wall Street, sitting at the cashier's window of the new bank would decide on the payments to be made to the creditor nations (England, France, Belgium, Italy, etc., etc.), the percentages, the frequency of payment, and so forth, and would further be the controlling factor in any attempt to commercialize the reparations payments. Should the plan be adopted on this basis, the entire financial structure of the nations involved would be in the grip of the huge octopus whose head is in New York and its tentacles everywhere else.

This is all the more so since the question of debt and reparations payments is far from being a secondary question. On the contrary, it is the focal point today of the sharpening conflicts between the imperialist powers who are vainly seeking a permanently satisfactory way out of the quagmire of contradictions into which world capitalism sinks more deeply every year. On the question of reparations and debts, and all that flows from it, hinges the question of the so-called European bloc against the United States, the increasingly strained relations between the various imperialist powers in Europe itself, and, mainly, the question of the growing antagonism between England and the United States. On the consequences of the solution of the debt problem hinges to a large extent the question of the increasing Leftward tendency of the German working class and the perspectives of the German proletarian revolution.

But precisely because of all that is involved, a settlement of the question by imperialism—meaning a settlement that will actually solve these burning problems—is impossible of achievement. The establishment of the international debt clear-

ing bank will not settle the question. At best it will succeed only in delaying for a brief period the final revolutionary solution.

Such a bank cannot settle the question to the satisfaction of France and England on one side, and Germany or the United States on the other. The German bourgeoisie demands a sharp downward revision of the reparations payments. That is, the German industrialists and bankers, with the renewed strength accumulated in the past years of rehabilitation, demand a greater share of the profits extorted from the sorely pressed German proletariat which up to now have been turned over in part to the Allied bourgeoisie in reparations payments.

On the other hand, England, whose financial condition is far from a desirable one, demands from Germany the payment of such reparations as will cover at least the British debt to the United States, which has been estimated at some five billion dollars.

The French Shylocks demand from Germany payments that will run up to about four billion dollars, that is, the French debt to the United States, plus its debt to England, plus the indemnity it claims for the devastated war areas. Unfortunately for Germany, incidentally, France still holds over its head the question of evacuating the 2nd and 3rd Rhine zones, to which Briand will not pledge himself definitely unless there is a satisfactory financial settlement.

Similar demands are presented by the other former Allies; the Little Entente even goes so far (under French and Italian coaching, to be sure,) as to demand that Germany pay the entire debt of the former Entente of the Central Empires.

American imperialism, further, has no inclination to see the Allies receiving sufficient funds from Germany to maintain and strengthen their military and naval machinery for probable future use against the U. S. Especially so, since such funds will necessarily derive from Germany, at the expense of its industrial and financial development, from which the United States expects to receive the payments on the tens of millions of dollars in-

vested in Germany since the inauguration of the Dawes Plan.

There is no doubt that a temporary "solution"—by the typical method of capitalist anarchy—can be found to this problem. But the solution can "work" only at the expense of the German proletariat, already doubly-exploited, already subjected to a most intense rationalization, already driven into a constantly lower condition of life. All signs point to the increased rapidity of the tempo of this development.

American imperialism, already deeply involved in the maelstrom of world economics and drawn inexorably deeper into the vortex, is seeking to fight its way out at the expense of the European bourgeoisie, chiefly of the German bourgeoisie, who in turn unload their burdens on the German proletariat. The German bourgeoisie, for its part, is preparing the grounds for a more violent pressure upon the working class.

These preparations are reflected on the political field by the movement for a "bloodless putsch" in Germany, for the establishment of a naked dictatorship. The reactionary press in Germany demands ever greater power for the President, Hindenburg, who has, significantly enough, refused to withdraw from the position of honorary chief of the fascist Stahhelm. The same press is filled with sharp criticisms of "the outworn, fruitless parliamentary system." It is further significant that Hjalmar Schacht, head of the German State Bank, and chief German negotiator at the Experts' Conference, is mentioned prominently for the post of German Mussolini. Incidentally, the German social-democracy, nominally at the head of the government, is in reality clearing the road for the reactionary coup, and the repetition of a collaboration with naked reaction to suppress the rebellious proletariat—as was done years ago by Ebert and Severing—is entirely likely.

The bourgeoisie may feel elated at the thought that they are solving this delicate question satisfactorily by uprooting the old Dawes plan in order to plant a new one. But they are blindly sowing dragon's teeth. Whether the harvest is to be a reactionary dictatorship or a proletarian revolution in Germany will depend chiefly on the strength, preparedness and resolution of the German Bolsheviks.

## Trotsky's Reply to Stalin

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

modest man and irreproachable Party comrade they tried to extort confirmation of their consciously concocted and false accusations in the Thermidorian spirit. Butov answered with his heroic hunger strike which lasted fifty days and brought on his death in prison in September of this year. Violence, blows, torture—physical and moral—are applied to the best worker-Bolsheviks for their loyalty to the October.

These are the general conditions which according to the Council of the G. P. U. "offer no obstacle at all" to the political activity of the Opposition in general and of myself in particular.

The miserable threat to change these conditions in the sense of a stricter isolation simply signifies that the Stalin faction has decided to replace exile by imprisonment. This decision, as is mentioned above, is nothing new to me. Already adopted as a perspective in 1924, this decision has been gradually converted into deed over a series of stages, in order to accustom the crushed and deceived Party in a round-about manner to the methods of Stalin, whose rule disloyalty has today matured to the most venomous bureaucratic dishonesty.

In the Declaration to the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, where we refuted the slanders which besmirch only their authors, we made known our unshakable readiness to fight within the framework of the Party with all the methods of Party democracy for the ideas of Marx and Lenin without which the Party suffocates, petrifies and crumbles. Once more we made known our unflinching readiness to help the proletarian kernel of the Party with word and deed to change the political course, to restore the health of the Party and the Soviet power with united forces—without convulsions or catastrophes. We will stand firm by these words. To the accusation of factional work we answered that it can be liquidated immediately only when Article 58<sup>1</sup>, perfidiously applied to us, is recalled and we are taken back into the Party again, not as repentant sinners but as revolutionary fighters who are not betraying their banner. As though we

had foreseen the ultimatum presented to us today, we wrote literally in the Declaration:

"Only a bureaucracy corrupted to its roots can demand this renunciation (from political activity, that is, from service to the Party and the international proletariat). Only contemptible renegades can give such a promise."

I can change nothing in these words. I submit them again to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Executive Committee of the Comintern which bear the full responsibility for the work of the G. P. U.

Each to his own part! You want to continue to carry out the promptings of the class forces hostile to the proletariat. We know our duty. We will carry it out to the end.

L. D. TROTSKY.  
December 16, 1928, Alma Alta.

<sup>1</sup> Article 58 of the Penal Code of the Soviet Union deals with the counter-revolutionary activities. It was employed by Stalin to imprison and exile the Opposition.

## An Opposition in England

We are glad to announce the formation of an Opposition Group in the Communist Party of Great Britain for the first time since the beginning of the struggle between the Russian Opposition and the Centrist regime. The Opposition in the British Party consists of a number of tested Bolshevik fighters who stand completely on the Platform of the Opposition led by Comrade Trotsky. They have begun a struggle to present their viewpoint to the Party and win the British revolutionary workers to the revival of the Communist movement on the basis of Marx's and Lenin's teachings.

We send our warm fraternal greetings to our British comrades. The Opposition, in the face of persecution, suppression and misrepresentation of its views, continues to grow and march forward to its inevitable victory.

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