

# The Plenum of the American Communist Opposition

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Another important step in the development of the Communist Opposition was marked by the full meeting of the National Committee of the Communist League of America—the first full meeting since our National Conference—which has just concluded its sessions in New York City, May 24-27, 1930.

Since our Committee contains representatives of most of the important districts of our organization the committee meeting had the significance of a small conference. Such gatherings are rare with us, and not because we see a virtue in this rarity.

The great difficulties under which we conduct our fight—our numerical weakness, our poverty and the great distances which separate us—preclude for the time being that frequency of representative gatherings toward which we aspire. This makes us value all the more those meetings which are possible under the circumstances and imparts to them an exceptional importance in the life of our organization. We have to expect that such meetings will yield the political maximum and not be merely formal and decorative affairs.

Our National Conference held last year at Chicago bore such a character; and the meeting of the National Committee just held in New York—a meeting, like all our activities, made possible by Spartan sacrifice—will no doubt bring fruitful results in our work for the near future.

## Political Unity of Plenum

The National Committee is a unit on all important political questions. We are at one with the leadership of the Opposition on the International field. Exhaustive discussion over a period of several days demonstrated that the fundamental unity of our conceptions on the basic principles which lie at the bottom of our fight as a regiment of the International Marxist Opposition is joined with a complete solidarity on tactical questions and perspectives. This applies to our approach to the general problems of the class struggle as well as to the narrower issues of the struggle against the Centrist bureaucracy in the Communist movement. All these questions are bound together.

The platform adopted at our National Conference a year ago gave a correct Marxist answer to them.

All the intervening experience has served to confirm the platform and it retains its validity today. It forms the basis of the decisions arrived at by the National Committee for the further extension of our fight.

## Opposition Platform Confirmed

The economic situation in the country has developed in the main along the line of our analysis and forecast a year ago. There are no important signs yet of a speedy recovery from the industrial crisis and there are many indications of tendencies which will prolong and aggravate it; driving the financial overlords of America irresistibly to seek for a solution at the expense of Europe. A still heavier pressure upon the American proletariat and a sharpening of the international rivalries and conflicts are the inescapable implications of the situation.

Even if the subjective reactions of the American workers proceed slowly—and that is so far the case—the soil is being prepared for a profound change in their attitude toward the capitalist system. There are many reasons to calculate upon an accelerated process of working class radicalization and a vastly expanded field for the development of a proletarian Communist movement. To prevent the reformist canalization of the oncoming movement and to develop its revolutionary implications is the Communist task in the period that lies ahead. The bungling, the corruption, the eclectic zig-zags and Leftist adventurism of the Centrist bureaucracy is the greatest obstacle to the execution of this task and an objective aid to social reformism. The Lovestone Right wing is an ideological bridge to social reformism which will become an increasing danger to the Communist movement in a period of intensifying class struggle. The fight for Marxist methods and Marxist policies falls to the Communist Opposition and is carried on by it alone. Such, in brief, was the general estimate of our Plenum which shaped its decisions regarding our future activities.

The question of perspectives in the crisis in the Communist movement occupied a prominent place in the discussions of the Plenum. On this point clear and definite answers were given. We will not relent in our revolutionary fight against the Centrist bureaucrats for a single moment on a single issue. On the contrary, sharper, more intransigent, more irreconcilable struggle for a Lenin Party was the watchword of our Plenum.

## Perspectives of Party Crisis

The opposition, despite all obstacles, all perversions of our standpoint, all suppression all terror, all slander, is growing and will continue to grow in the proletarian ranks of the Party. The internal crisis from which the Opposition is just emerging in a number of European countries has passed us by. We had no capitulators worth mentioning; no elements poisoned by Zinoviev-Maslow cynicism. We unfurled the banner of the International Opposition at the time of its lowest ebb when there could be no perspective but that of a long and stubborn struggle as an expelled minority. Our tradition is the tradition of years of struggle for a proletarian movement against the petty-bourgeois current of Lovestone-Pepper-Wolfe and the trade union eclecticism of Foster-Johnstone-Browder. Thus we were "prepared by the past", as Trotsky said, and the intensity of the struggle does not pull us apart but binds us more firmly together.

## Preparing New Forces

We will continue, as before, to base ourselves primarily on the Party and the Left wing workers immediately under its influence. The great bulk of the revolutionary workers are there, and this fact determines our position as a faction of the Party, not as another Party. We do not identify the proletarian revolutionaries in the Party and the Left wing with its corrupted upper stratum. The Plenum, while confirming our general policy on this question made a just criticism of the inadequate organization of our fight within the Party. Measures were adopted providing for more energetic and systematic work in this respect. The near future, thanks to these decisions, will see our unflinching criticism "from without" supplemented by a determined struggle "from within". The recruiting power of the Opposition in the Party ranks is by no means exhausted. It is only beginning as events already maturing will demonstrate. The second layer of Oppositionists will soon confront the Centrist phrase-mongers as an organized faction.

## The Needle Trades Situation

An especially interesting and significant phase of the National Committee meeting was a discussion of the situation in the Needle Trades, based on the report of a prominent comrade in the Union who has recently found the way to the Platform of the Opposition. This discussion laid the ground for the preparation of a comprehensive statement of policy in the needle trades crisis, similar to our statement on the Miners' Union, which is soon to be issued in the name of our League. The trade union section of our Platform is borne out by the experiences in the needle trades in all respects and it will provide the guiding line of our concrete statement of policy. The Party leadership has brought the needle trades Left wing to a blind alley. The workers must be told the truth and shown the way out of this blind alley.

This means to give a Marxist analysis which ignores none of the realities and to draw inferences based on the fundamental resolutions of the Comintern under Lenin on the trade union question. The Party bureaucrats have attempted to deal with the crisis by the most shameful scandal-mongering against the Right wing factional opponents of today—their factional brothers of yesterday and brothers yet under the skin. The sole beneficiaries of this monstrous example of "self criticism" up to date are the Black Hundred gang of Schlesinger, Wolf and Co., and in the final analysis the employers. What is needed now is an objective Communist statement of policy that will show the Left wing workers how to regain their lost ground. The discussion of this question at our

Plenum indicated the line for such a statement.

## Maintain the Weekly Militant

Is it possible to continue the publication of the Weekly Militant? This question, startling in its implications to every supporter of the Opposition who knows its incomparable value, was faced and discussed by the National Committee in the most thoroughgoing and realistic manner. We have no money. The Plenum met without enough on hand to pay for the current issue and it had to be skipped. The regular income of the paper covers only half of the expense. How has the Weekly been maintained up till now? No scientific auditor or accountant would undertake to answer that question. For all the known rules of financial management have been broken and miracles have been performed. Our main resource was the fund established before the Weekly was launched. But that was used up long ago. For months now it has been nip and tuck for every issue. Special donations, loans here and there, last minute collections, voluntary labor, unpaid wages and the devil knows what other expedients tell the story. But now we are flat broke and in debt and the question posed itself categorically: shall we continue? Can we continue? And the answer of the Plenum with one voice was: We can and we will!

Weighing the matter soberly and practically we decided that, great as the sacrifices have been, we have not yet exhausted our resources. Various practical measures for raising new funds and effecting still further economies were decided on. Plans to develop the support from branches through methods employed by the Minneapolis Branch were worked out. A systematic program of meetings, affairs and money-raising devices was projected. Most important of all, perhaps was the decision to carry the appeal to the wide circle of sympathizers through a public campaign in the Militant. Up till now the members of our League—and not all of them—have shouldered the main burden. Now we must broaden out and go to every supporter and sympathizer of our historic movement with the appeal for financial support to maintain the paper.

## Trotsky on the Militant

Comrade Trotsky called the Militant an inspiring force for the entire International movement of Communism. He said we should make "heroic efforts" to keep it going as a Weekly. It was with this faith that our movement is capable of even heroic efforts that the Plenum decided to launch a new campaign for the Weekly Militant.

Along with this was the working out of systematic organization and propaganda work to follow the tour of comrade Shachtman. The tour of comrade Shachtman, reporting on his work as our international delegate, cannot fail to strengthen the solidarity of our members with the embattled oppositionists of other lands and to effect a corresponding stimulus in their activity on the national field. An organization tour is to be arranged for early fall, with another meeting of the National Committee and one or more additional lecture tours in preparation for our Second National Conference in the Spring. The program of book and pamphlet publication long deferred for financial reasons, will also soon begin. The necessary organization of the Left wing workers who sympathize with our policy will soon begin to take shape in at least a few unions, according to the decision of the Plenum. All together, it can be said without exaggeration that the meeting of the National Committee will bear fruit in the development of our organization work as well as in political and ideological consolidation.

## Strengthening the Center

The final important action of the Plenum was the decision to strengthen the Central administration by the addition of other qualified comrades. By this decision comrade Spector is to remain in New York and comrade Swaback is to come in the near future.

With these additions to the center it will begin to take more definite shape as the nucleus of a political committee of the Communist movement reacting to all issues of the class struggle, which is the

true and proper function of the leading body of the Opposition. The progressive development of such a leading political group is unquestionably one of the great historic tasks which the Opposition must accomplish in preparation for the future. Our struggle against the stream, under a machine-gun fire of calumny, is not without its positive sides. It is a testing and sifting process in which the capacities of revolutionaries to solve problems by their own resources and to remain steadfast in the struggle for principle is determined. Without such qualities a genuine proletarian leadership is impossible. The history of the International labor movement teaches no lesson more clearly than this one.

The ruling bureaucrats have no need to bring a Marxist objectivity and moral prerequisites to their offices. They secure appointment by an infinite capacity for obedience to those "above them" and they rule by arbitrary command over those "below". The inevitable outcome of such a perverted system is not only a political, but also a moral stultification. It would be the greatest folly to imagine that such people, on the whole, can constitute the leading force of the proletarian movement on a Leninist path. Exceptions are possible in the case of individuals, but the decisive nucleus of the future leadership will not and cannot come from that corrupted circle which is today befouling the banner of Communism and undermining its influence. Our task is to develop the leadership of the future in the struggle against them. The Plenary meeting of our National Committee, by all of its work and decisions, as well as by its maturely political approach to them, was a striking demonstration that our fight has already yielded positive results along this line.

## Consolidation

If the Plenum registered a political and ideological consolidation within our organization, the mass meeting which followed its adjournment showed an expansion and an increased confidence and enthusiasm of the sympathizing forces around us. Suppression, terrorism, hooliganism—after a temporary "victory"—are bringing the unavoidable reaction. The Communist workers, more and more, want to hear our message. And when they hear it, it becomes their own. There was a warmth and friendliness in this audience, made up in large part of new people, which offered a sharp contrast to the partly hostile, partly curious, crowds we faced in the earlier days of our open struggle.

The successful mass meeting was a fitting culmination to the Plenum. Both events said clearly to all who want to hear: the Opposition is on the march, its road is forward.

## Mexico Stalinists Continue Splitting

The Stalinist leadership of the Communist Party of Mexico continues its splitting policy, the latest victim of the present "line" being comrade David Alfaro Siqueiros, General Secretary, until his recent removal by Party orders, of the Unitarian Sindicalist Confederation. One of the principal charges against comrade Siqueiros is that he supports the Left Opposition, about which we have no exact information as yet, but which indicates the narrow sectarian policies of the official Party leadership. Siqueiros was a member of the Central Committee of the Mexican Party until recently, and was also head of the Mexican delegation at the Latin American Trade Union Congress held at Montevideo, Uruguay in 1929. Comrade Siqueiros is at present under arrest for participation in the May Day demonstration.

We are also aware of the fact that two of the five members of the Central Committee of the Young Communist Federation of Mexico have been barred from activity, an act equivalent to their suspension. These comrades, Eduardo Calero and Jorge Pino are also accused vaguely by the Stalinist bureaucrats of "sympathy with the Opposition" and causes.