

## In the Party

# Why I Joined the Left Opposition

Comrade Sylvia Bleeker, organizer of the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union, and one of the oldest members of the Party, whose case we spoke of in the *Militant*, two issues ago, has been expelled for "Trotskyism". She sends us the following declaration:

The statement by the Party Central Control Commission on my expulsion (*Daily Worker*, 9-3-1930) needs further explanation. It was not merely a statement of my expulsion but a slander and misrepresentation of my relation to the struggle in general. And while I am sure that every worker or member of our Union who read it felt repelled by such contemptible slander, I nevertheless wish to make a few explanatory remarks.

### Records Needs No Apology

My record of work, activities and devotion to the Needle Trades Workers Industrial Union and the Party needs no apology. It has been known to the workers for almost 10 years. Any work assigned to me was carried out faithfully and flawlessly. And were it not for my agreement with the platform of the Communist League, the Party would still speak of my loyalty.

My adherence to the "Trotsky Opposition" in no way eradicates my former record. On the contrary, it is a logical consequence of my serious and vital concern with the policies of the C.I. and its American section.

Since when is one a good Communist who doesn't think, question or disagree? Since when has it become our slogan: Obey and not ask questions? The Communist Party is not a religious sect (and even their history is filled with "periods of questioning"). The Party is the political weapon of the workers in the fight against the capitalist system, and it is the duty of every Communist to use this weapon to its maximum effectiveness. We need the Communist Party to lead the working class in all its struggles; we need it to fight and expose reformist influence among the workers; we need it to build the kernel of the proletarian revolution. No sooner do the policies of the Party fail to live up to its historical role than every Communist must point it out, criticize and if compelled, organize a faction to correct these policies.

That is exactly what comrade Trotsky has been doing, and that is exactly what the American Left Opposition is doing at present. The criticism made by comrade Trotsky from 1923 to now, whether nationally or internationally, has been entirely confirmed by events, much more than any of us expected. And it is because of the very correctness of his prognoses that he doesn't stand alone but has a movement of devoted class-conscious workers behind him. Every day brings new groups of adherents to the course of Leninism as against the policies of Stalin's regime, which is leading the Party into the abyss.

### A Contemptible Slander

The C.C.C. statement that I "covered myself with the cloak of Trotskyism to escape from the struggle" is a despicable slander. No serious worker believes it now and will surely not believe it in the future. I remain in the ranks of the class-conscious workers and will work together with them regardless of difficulties. But true to my principles, I shall never agree with either the present official policies of the Party which are disastrous, nor with the bureaucratization of the Party. The average member in our Party is becoming a mere cog and not a sober, conscious fighter. This is not a fault of the Communist ideal but of the present Party leadership.

The frequent changes and uncertainties in the Party and trade union policies, without any broad discussion at the units, the Party fractions, introduce confusion, apathy and general loss of faith by the rank and file. Reorganizations take place at such a tempo that it is no longer possible to follow them up. These constant reorganizations are resorted to as a substitute for correct policies, but they are absolutely wrong and suicidal. The fact is that the attendance at Party fraction meetings has

been reduced to a fourth of the membership. The mechanical introduction of policies, their mechanical execution, abolition and re-introduction (as in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers) are ruinous.

Elections in the Party are becoming a word of the past. Secretaries and financial secretaries can no longer be elected, only appointed by the bureau!

Can or should a real Communist overlook all this? Is it not time to make an end to all these ruinous policies? Regardless of what the official apparatus does—expel, slander, temporarily isolate us, beat us up, break up meetings—it is our turn to speak. A Communist who keeps quiet now when danger is facing our Party is a coward and a slacker against the working class. The differences in the Comintern can no longer be concealed. The platform of the Leninist Opposition can no longer be misrepresented or misquoted. The facts are out in the daylight.

### Communism Weakened by Expulsions

By expelling us from the Party's ranks, our strength is only weakened. By driving us out of active work in the trade unions and auxiliary organizations, the Party officials are deliberately hurting the cause of the workers. We want to be in the Party. We want to be in the trade unions. We want to be in every class struggle. We are ready and willing to sacrifice as we have proved in the past. Vicious attacks and slander will not solve the problem.

We ask for a broad and genuine discussion of the problems we are now facing. We demand that a halt be called to the unheard of repression and persecution of the Opposition comrades in the Soviet Union. The bureaucrats cannot and will not tear us away from the ranks of Communism and the working class!

—SYLVIA BLEEKER

## A Reply to Comrade Weisbord

(Continued from Page 5)

the native bourgeoisie leads them into a dispute with the British imperialists which "unleashes the energy of the masses". But so did Kerensky "unleash the energy of the masses". And like him, the Ghandists at the same time fetter the energy of the masses. A genuine unleashing—and proper direction—of the energies of the masses can happen only by fighting as mercilessly against the national bourgeoisie and for the independence of the proletariat (which alone enables it to lead behind it the peasantry) as the Bolsheviks fought against the Kerensky and Menshevik compromisers in 1917. This must be repeated and repeated until it penetrates every fiber of the Indian revolutionists.

It is with comrade Weisbord's proposals on the various groups in the movement that the Left Opposition has its sharpest disagreement. Advocacy of such views by a leading comrades is contrary to all we stand for. "All Communist groups must work together on the basis of the recognition of the Communist character of each group. The Communist 'Majority' group and the Communist League group by working together can help re-establish mass work . . . they can help to separate the Communist movement as a whole from the Mensheviks", etc., etc. This is false from beginning to end.

We recognize the Communist character of the Right wing only insofar as it still groups a number of good Communist workers whom the incompetent Centrist bureaucracy was unable to hold. We contend that the Right wing now occupies a position midway between social democracy (Menshevism) and Communism—not for long. It is true, as is shown by the passage of some of its leading strata directly into the camp of Amsterdam and the international of August 1914. How can we, the Marxist wing of the movement, unite with this semi-Menshevik wing (a bloc which under present conditions would mean a movement directed against the official Communist movement), in order to "separate" the Communist movement as a whole from the Mensheviks? How can a bloc with the Right wing "re-establish mass work", when it is the whole philosophy of the Right wing that has brought the Communist movement into such isolation from the

## Stalinist Party Folly in St. Louis

ST. LOUIS—

Since the expulsion of the Opposition, the C.P. has practically ceased to exist in this territory. With the loss of its best members it no longer has any contact with the trade unions. Jealous of Opposition influence in the trade unions the Party finally succeeded by underhanded methods in getting our members expelled from them. In consequence, all militant Left wing elements have been barred from participation in the unions, leaving the field entirely in the hands of bureaucratic reactionaries. Well known militants like MacMillan and Goldberg have been expelled because of these malicious and senseless Party tactics.

### Opposition Organizes Unemployed

The Communist Opposition was the first in this territory to organize an Unemployed Council which led a mass demonstration of 1,500 on January 3rd through the business section of St. Louis. The Party was invited to participate but refused on the grounds that they were not the organizers.

Seeing our success and in order not to be outdone, the Party finally organized its own council. The Opposition, knowing their council was in fact nothing but a name, nevertheless, sent delegates asking for a united front of all workers against unemployment. This the Party not only refused but threw our delegates out. Because of this action, the one or two members whom the Party had succeeded in gaining, left and came over to our group.

Remembering our success in demonstrating, the local Stalinists decided to arrange a series of demonstrations of their own. These turned out complete fizzes, each being a bigger failure than its predecessor. The Party speakers, instead of

tackling the problem of unemployment turned their meeting into anti-Trotsky meetings, which of course meant nothing to the rank and file unemployed. The workers, disgusted with such tactics, left and are now in our ranks.

After two months of strenuous effort the Party, succeeded with the co-operation of the Opposition, in mustering about 200 demonstrators for the Sacco-Vanzetti protest meeting. The Stalinists, instead of exposing the system which burned Sacco and Vanzetti, turned this meeting also into an anti-Trotsky affair. They also decided to devote their talents to a strenuous attack on the one poor wilted Lovestoneite in the city calling him among other things a social menace and a Sacco-Vanzetti lyncher. much to the amusement of the spectators.

In spite of Party persecution the Opposition goes forward. With the exception of the officials, the rank and file members have been neutralized. This has occurred in spite of the fact that members are expelled when caught talking to Opposition sympathizers or when found attending Opposition meetings.

A case in point is the recent expulsion of the secretary of the Y.C.L., Frank Wall, one of the most active of the League members when caught by Party spies attending Shachtman's lecture. He was summarily "dismissed". It seems that it is no longer necessary to endorse the Opposition platform for expulsion, but expulsions are now in order for members daring to associate with "Trotskyists".

While the Party goes onward in its path of complete isolation, the Opposition grows in membership and influence among rank and file workers. The Left wing militants continue in their task of carrying forward true Communist education, co-operating with all workers, and aiding the sale of the *Militant*. The *Militant* now has a larger subscription list in this city than the *Daily Worker*. The sale of Klorkeft also is not smaller than the sale of the Jewish Morning Freiheit. Consequently with the coming of the fall cool weather we expect to make even bigger strides and still more successes.

—H.L.GOLDBERG

masses (Chinese revolution, British general strike, India, etc., etc.) into opportunist swamps from which Centristism is now trying ineffectively, to issue by means of the ultra-Leftist rope?

### Road to Ruin, Not to Victory

Such a policy, combined as it is with comrade Weisbord's entirely false estimate of Centristism (his denial of it, in fact) is the shortest road to destruction for the Left Opposition and a disavowal of its historical function. This is clear from all the experiences of the Opposition in Europe. Our road is not that of Urbahns, Pollack and Paz who only discredited the Opposition and reduced what they controlled to hopeless sects.

On the basis of his present views on a number of vital questions, the national committee has decided that it cannot accept comrade Weisbord for membership in the League. At the same time it expressed

the hope and desire that further reflection and discussion would make it possible for comrade Weisbord to find his place as a fighter—and a valuable one—in the ranks of the Opposition. We have welcomed this discussion and the criticisms made by comrade Weisbord, particularly because it offered the opportunity for a recapitulation of our point of view. At the same time, the national committee decided, in view of Weisbord's closeness to the views of the Opposition, to invite his collaboration in fields of work conforming to his position.

National Committee  
Communist League of America (Opposition)

## BOOKS - FOR - WORKERS

**SINCE LENIN DIED** by Max Eastman, Labour Publishing Company, London, 1925, 158 pages.

The fact that this book earned the concentrated scorn of the latter-day Comintern leadership, should immediately interest all Communists suffering under the deluge of "anti-Trotskyist" verbiage distributed in recent years under the guise of Leninism. Aspirants to leadership, in all English-speaking countries, from Rothstein to Browder, finding the thorny path of fight against capitalism not so promising, have turned with enthusiasm to slinging mud at the Russian Opposition and its leader, comrade Trotsky. But the authority of these slanderers of the revolution is shortlived. This book is one of the nails in their political coffin.

Coming fresh from the Thirteenth Party Congress of the Russian Party (May, 1924) and the hysterical campaign leading up to Trotsky's resignation as president of the Revolutionary Military Soviet in January, 1925, Max Eastman was the first to publish the authentic documents of the controversy in English. He was in Russia during the whole development of the fight, witnessed the consolidation of the shady opponents

of Leninism under the crafty leadership of the "Triumvirate". The book is valuable to us now because in it are published the original documents, theses, letters and press articles of the period. These documents have already been supplemented, amplified and a thousand times verified in the writings of comrade Trotsky and other leaders of the Russian Opposition. Also by the shamefaced confessions of Zinoviev, Kamenev, etc. when they were no longer of use to Stalin.

Eastman will be remembered for unswerving courage and determination in the face of the solid mass of howling bureaucrats, to speak the truth and prove it. He has the honor of being one of the first to be expelled from the American Party for supporting the Russian Opposition. He certainly was the first to bring the documents and platform of the Russian Opposition out of the "illegality" imposed by Stalin and into the light of day. —CARL COWL

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