

Secr't Greetings Conference

Increasing Problems Face the International Left Opposition

To the Communist League of America
Dear Comrades:

The International Secretariat sends its warmest greetings to the Second National Conference of the American section of the Left Opposition, which we are sure will contribute towards fortifying your organization and which will be the point of departure of a new period of development. The International Opposition, for material reasons, cannot participate effectively in your Conference and also, as a result of great difficulties, it cannot bring the necessary contribution to your discussion.

The tasks that are posed at the present moment for the Communist movement and specifically for our Left faction, are of so wide a scope that they necessitate that the political work of clearing up, of enlightenment, of delimitation and the corresponding organizational work which have been undertaken, especially in the last two years, be followed up at a more sustained pace, a more accelerated rhythm. The events in Spain have begun without a Communist party, but also without an organized Opposition, having at its disposal trained militants, known organs. In the present situation in Germany, there does exist a numerically strong C. P. but one without political leadership, and the Opposition is still much too weak to be able to exercise a substantial political role there. In England, the ruin of the C. P., caused by the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee, permits the leaders of the Labor party to hold back the masses affected by the crisis; there too, the Opposition is unable to give the party its strength, its vitality, being itself in its very first stages.

You insist very rightly in your thesis on the importance of the United States in the world and the weight it bears upon European economy. This relationship of forces which our comrade Trotsky already brought to light a few years ago, has lately been forced upon the blindest. Imperialism seeks more and more to put Europe on rattions; its policy will not fall to aggravate and exacerbate the conflicts in Europe. But also the curtailed position of Europe will have repercussions in the United States; and there, as in Europe, the burdens which world capitalism will seek to have the working masses bear, will be so heavy that the latter, in order to oppose it, will be drawn into great struggles.

The world crisis, which continues to develop, will only increase the favorable objective conditions for the revolutionary movement. The issue from the development of the crisis depends, thus, essentially upon subjective factors, upon the capacity of the Comintern and its sections, consequently, upon the capacity of the International Left Opposition to shift the political course of the C. I.

In this sense, the results already obtained by the Communist League of America are very substantial. Your thesis, those of the Opposition Youth, the discussion they have aroused, as well as the weekly appearance of the Militant, are indications of this. Another indication of your consolidation lies in the

manner in which you have been able to oppose the confusionist tendencies of Welsbord and to reject them without undergoing a crisis as painful as those which many European sections experienced.

But in order to assure from now on a rapid and vigorous development of the Left Opposition—in America as elsewhere—we must very quickly apply ourselves to strengthening the organization of the Left Opposition. The Bolshevik party, where they applied themselves to delimiting clearly the organization of a group, few in numbers as it was, should serve us as an example. Ideological correctness is intimately bound up with the solidity of the organization. It was inevitable that, at the outset, the inadequacies, the political inexperience of the Opposition groupings, should be translated into the field of organization. But at the present moment, it is high time and it is possible to have the Opposition take a step forward in this field. Two years of work, of efforts, of experience, are finding themselves concretized in the theses, in the resolutions to your national conference, as well as in other important sections of the Opposition (the French League, the Archivio-Marxists). In this way, each Opposition militant will find a firmer basis for his activity. In this way, the sections of the Left Opposition will be able to strengthen their work within the Communist party.

One of the most important tasks of the present moment is an organic consolidation of the Left Opposition within the Communist parties and the Comintern. The defeats of the past years, the present bankruptcy, have piled up profound discontentment in the masses who follow the parties, as well as among their members. The rupture of the party with the broad masses has been reflected in the parties. At the moment when the proletariat, resisting violently the capitalist offensive, will seek its road, all the elements, all the groups which have remained in the party without pronouncing themselves openly upon their policy, will also emerge from their passivity in order to seek actively to orient the policy of the C. P. The action of the Left Opposition upon these elements will be all the greater if its external action upon the party (which expulsion has imposed

upon it) will have, corresponding to it, an action within its own ranks, where the activity of all the Oppositionists will be coordinated in order to return the Comintern, against the Centrists, to the path of Marxism which will lead it to victory.

We wish you the accomplishment of a fruitful labor, and we send you, dear comrades, our Communist greetings.

For the International Secretariat,
M. MILL.

Books by Leon Trotsky

THE STRATEGY OF THE WORLD REVOLUTION
86 pages, two-colored paper cover 25c
Introduction by Max Shachtman

THE DRAFT PROGRAM OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
A Criticism of Fundamentals
Introduction by J. P. Cannon
140 pages hard paper cover 35c

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION
80 pages, paper cover 10c

THE PERMANENT REVOLUTION
208 page book—cloth bound 1.00
paper bound .50

THE REAL SITUATION IN RUSSIA
Introduction by Max Eastman
384 page book formerly \$2 now 1.00

MY LIFE—600 pages 5.00

COMMUNISM AND SYNDICALISM
The Trade Union Question
Introduction by James P. Cannon
64 pages, paper cover 15c

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION IN DANGER
64 pages paper cover 15c

PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE U. S. S. R.
48 pages, paper cover 15c
Special Rates in Bundles of 5 or more

SINCE LENIN DIED
By Max Eastman
1924 50c
158 page book printed in London

Order from
PIONEER PUBLISHERS
84 East 10th Street
New York City

SPANISH REVOLUTION

The Revolution in Spain . . . 10c By LEON TROTSKY
The Spanish Revolution in Danger . . . 15c

These two pamphlets will give the reader an invaluable analysis of the present situation in Spain and the prospects of the further development of the revolution. The standpoint of the Opposition, in contrast to that of all the other groups involved in the present Spanish situation (the official Communist party, the Maurin group, the syndicalists, and others), is presented with the exceptional clarity and penetration for which the author is so well-known.

Send Orders and Funds to the
PIONEER PUBLISHERS 84 East 10th Street, New York, N. Y.

A Ferment in the Chicago Y. C. L.

On September 14, 1931, three former members of the Executive Committee of District 8, Young Communist League, issued a statement to all members on why two, Norman Satir and Ruth Andras, have been expelled from membership, and one, Nathan Gould, is about to meet the same fate (he has since been expelled also).

The charges of these comrades are: that based on a system of bureaucracy, a regime of terror, of expulsion, an incapable district and national leadership has attached itself to the Y. C. L. and prevents the League from efficiently fulfilling its role.

The same leadership, in order to maintain its position, has had to line up comrades against Satir who had taken a critical attitude towards the activity of the National Committee, spread lies and slanders, suppress articles written for the pre-convention discussion, not allow anybody time to present any position opposing the National Committee and that the party leadership has condoned and encouraged the younger bureaucrats.

The document charges that the last convention of the Y. C. L. was not a Communist convention, because there was no pre-convention thesis, no discussion involving the membership. The statement goes on to tell what the League bureaucracy is attempting to hide: political bankruptcy (if that term can be applied to a leadership which never was capable). According to the Y. C. L. letter, the National Committee of the American League has: (1) been absent from the economic field; (2) not formulated any youth demands; (3) no shop nuclei; (4) no anti-militarist work; (5) no opponent work; (6) crisis in sports and Pioneers; (7) League still isolated. To these, the trio add four additional points: (8) no single shock plan was completed; (9) the ideological level of the League is at its lowest; (10) bureaucracy is the prevailing system; (11) the National Committee is entirely incapable of independent analyses or formulation of correct policies; (12) all gains that were made, were made after the Y. C. L. threat of removal and these gains are microscopic.

According to the present leadership, the League membership (using "third period" mathematics) is "around 3,000". Even if these figures are correct, they show a great discrepancy between potential possibilities and actual results. Yet, many join the Y. C. L. continuously, but go through it like water through a sieve. Why?

The main reason for this, the statement goes on to say, is the low ideological level of the membership. Theory, while openly paid lip-service, is secretly sneered at as a pre-"third period" prejudice. Then the document says: "To expect the leadership to change their attitude on this matter is hopeless. Because this leadership can only exist as long as widespread ignorance prevails . . . political consciousness would mean the doom of this leadership".

Secondly, the strangling hold of the bureaucracy. Democratic centralism—the highest degree of democracy with the highest degree of centralism, becomes the handing down of decisions by the higher committees to the lower ranks with the air of a royal decree, or inflexible papal bull. The ranks must say, "To hear is to do." The efficient methods of Communist leadership are replaced by the carrying out of decisions by a membership who have no understanding of the reasons for the decision. Self-criticism becomes greatly similar to the confession-box proceedings of the Catholic Church. Like the Catholic Church, too, the only ones allowed to receive confession, to give chastisement or to allow absolution are higher bodies, while the "very, very low", if they attempt criticism, become "enemies of the working class".

Thirdly, the document goes on to show how these leaders are created. Not the most developed, ideologically and practically, but the "politically dishonest, opportunist and careerists—who will agree with everything that the higher bodies propose . . . ignoramuses" rise to the leadership. The proletarian leadership becomes merely a blind They take no real part in the work of the leadership.

The practical proposals of these protesting comrades then follow:

1. A broad and free discussion.
2. The discussion must be followed by a real convention.
3. The present leadership must be replaced by tempered young Communists.
4. Regular reports to the membership by the leaders.
5. Democratic centralism—free elections by and responsibility to the membership.
6. Broad discussions on all important questions.
7. Right of Communist criticism of leaders.
8. Bureaucracy must be destroyed.
9. Raise the theoretical level.
10. Proper relations between the Youth and the party.

With a call to the membership not to heed the bureaucrats' instructions to disassociate themselves from the signing comrades, the statement ends: "Out the bureaucrats! Build the League!"

The following is the statement of the Youth Committee of the Chicago branch of the Communist League of America (Opposition) on the recent developments in the Y. C. L.:

In Chicago, the statement of Norman Satir, Ruth Andras and Nathan Gould against the bureaucracy in the Y. C. L. has met with a warm welcome from the members of the Y. C. L. This in spite of a long and arduous campaign of slander.

While young comrades are not as well versed or experienced and therefore more easily misled than the older com-

rades, the psychological factors make bureaucracy more repugnant among the youth than ever among the adults. These signs of stirring life, which the Left Opposition always knew to be present, is a favorable portent.

The statement has obvious shortcomings. It fails to answer the **whence** of this bureaucracy. Its source, according to the statement, is a mystery, it sprang up from nowhere. That source is the Y. C. L. leadership and behind them the Stalinist revisionists of the teachings of Marx and Lenin in the C. I. Unless these comrades recognize this, their correct labors will be ineffectual. Every leadership will tend towards bureaucracy for the ideas of the Stalinist revisionists, not having ideological correctness, can only be defended by bureaucracy.

How long will a leadership that is honest and theoretically firm stand for "socialism in one country"; the Anglo-Russian Committee betrayal, the Chiang Kai-Shek alliance, the "third period", "social-Fascism", for the dubbing of Trotsky and the International Left Opposition as counter-revolutionists? The only kind of leadership the C. I. and the Y. C. I. bureaucrats can tolerate are bureaucratic ignoramuses. Any other kind could not tolerate the C. I. and Y. C. I. leaders.

The decline in membership is an international phenomenon when we discuss quality. When we discuss quantity, with the exception of Russia, where the reason for the exception is obvious, and Germany, where the situation is so favorable that members stream in, in spite of the bureaucrats, the same holds true in the entire International. The same causes in our brother Leagues produce the same effects as in the American League.

Our support of their statement will undoubtedly cause these comrades to be subjected to the epithet of "Trotskyists" which the bureaucrats will fling at them, as though that disposes of the questions raised. Do not permit this to divert your attention from the fight. Spread the rebellion, district and nation wide! Our support as our criticism, is given in a comradely fashion. The ousting of the bureaucracy, the re-arousing of the interest in Marxism, the study of the tactics and strategy of the movement, leads every sincere young revolutionist forward on the path towards the International Left Opposition.

We urge all comrades to study the position of the Left Opposition.
Youth Committee, C. L. A. (O.)
Chicago branch.

2nd Conference

(Continued from page 1)

squarily, analysed its reasons and became so much more convinced of our great vitality and powerful political position, by the splendid upward curve which could be recorded following immediately upon the slump. The branches of Boston, Philadelphia and St. Louis, which had witnessed particular difficulties, were re-established. New members were gained everywhere and to a yet greater degree, new contacts of sympathetic elements within and around the party. We rapidly increased our literature supply by printing new pamphlets and books by comrade Trotsky and extended its distribution. The Program of Expansion became a means of setting definite political objects for the material support given by all our contributors. Thus we organized the Pioneers Publishers, opening up new avenues for propaganda activities. We re-established the Militant as a weekly, strengthened the staff and made a small beginning toward field organizing work. Progress in rapid strides had political manifestations in important issues of the class struggle, to such an extent that the intervention could be felt, both by growing sympathy as well as by its pressure upon policies of the party bureaucrats, but also in the fact that the American League began to become more of an active participant in the International Left Opposition movement. The second conference could, of course, only accept this as a small beginning, but nevertheless a beginning in the right direction.

The Political Report

While it may be difficult to determine which item on the conference agenda, or which report made, called forth the greatest attention or most thorough discussion by the delegates, it stands to reason that in the discussion on the general political thesis most of the vital issues were concentrated. It was also in this document that a certain tactical departure from past position was presented in regards to our views toward the labor party question. Comrade Shachtman delivered the report for the National Committee and most every delegate made valuable contributions. All were unanimous in indorsing the general line represented by the thesis with possibly one exception, which advanced a view that the present crisis marked the beginning of the definite downward curve for United States capitalism whether or not it

could emerge from it at the cost of other imperialist powers and of its own working class. Then also, on the very vital question of our position as a faction of the Communist movement, discussion centered around a specific interpretation of what this implies. However, there was unanimous agreement that our platform is correct, i. e., that our orientation is directly upon the Communist movement, of which the Comintern, and in the United States, the official party is the center, as the only historically progressive force, to which our appeal, despite the blunders and mistakes of its bureaucratic leadership, is addressed for the purpose of re-establishing its Marxian foundation. But to make this effective the delegates again reaffirmed the necessity of organizing the Communists inside and outside the Communist Party of the United States on the platform of the Left Opposition.

As already mentioned, the second conference made a tactical departure from the views presented in our platform, adopted in 1929, in regards to the labor party question. While we then still carried remnants of officially adopted party views we considered it feasible under certain conditions for Communists to raise the slogan of organization of a labor party. In this respect, our thesis presented a change away from such views and found unanimous indorsement from the delegates, not, however, overlooking the fact that should a labor party come into existence upon a working class and trade union basis it would become necessary for us to consider our relation as Communists towards it, depending upon the general conditions existing.

The trade union discussion, report of which was made for the National Committee by comrade Swaback, was the second point on the agenda but with no less attention. It is particularly in this field that we have witnessed the sharpest clashes of policy with the Stalinist party apparatus and naturally more so with the Right wing views of the Lovestone group. That is because the issues present themselves here in the most concrete form, already in the initial stage of each specific struggle. We have had the very recent experiences of the strikes in the mine field and in Paterson. We have had the general experience of the T. U. U. L. unions under control of the party bureaucrats as well as the emergence of other new unions under leadership of social reform-

ists. All this rich material at hand in the view of the delegates had served to vindicate more decisively the views and the platform of the Left Opposition and complete unanimity prevailed in indorsing the National Committee thesis.

While space makes it necessary to treat the other reports more briefly, they received fully as much attention and created just as live and fundamental a discussion as the other reports mentioned. The next in order was the report on the international situation and the development and growth of the Left Opposition within the various countries. While it contained many important lessons of the birth pangs of a movement—expressed in this case particularly in groups and elements professing adherence at first to the Russian Left Opposition and later to the International Secretariat but without accepting its views thus having made several operations and splits necessary—all in all the main lesson accepted by the delegates became the one of striving much more seriously and consciously for a real international orientation. That is to function more actively and more directly as a part of the international movement and participate in all of its problems and achievements. As to the latter the conference could take joy in the great progress, to mention only two instances, the rapid growth organizationally and its revolutionary influence of our Left Opposition in Spain and the unification of four distinct Left Opposition groups in China into one organization.

A small token of this spirit the conference expressed in its cable greetings to the new weekly Left Opposition paper in Spain the "El Soviet" and to comrade Trotsky. Similarly it also expressed its feeling of solidarity with the thousands of Bolshevik-Leninist prisoners now in the Stalin prison camps in Siberia.

On the Soviet Union

In discussing the report on the situation within the Soviet Union the conference was fortunate in having the draft thesis presented by comrade Trotsky. It met with unanimous approval. The youth question received more serious attention than at our first conference. This is natural as we have since that time gained quite a good number of young members. A couple of valuable amendments were made to the youth thesis before its final acceptance and prospects are very good that the youth committee to be selected by our National Committee will find a splendid field for its work. We would be remiss if we failed to mention that several amendments and proposals were on hand from the branch-

es pertaining to the various issues and problems before the conference. But since all were in conformity with the general views presented in the various documents and reports, only altering formulations or adding minor points, it became quite easy to select only those which could really mean an improvement.

In the organization report, the second conference received a graphic picture of the developments which had taken place and had proposals presented for means of further strengthening in an organizational sense. A further elaborated constitution presented also served that purpose. The discussion in particular centered around concrete experiences in the tasks of building a Communist organization supplemented by experiences on a local scale as told by the delegates. Its general tenor became the one of deeper penetration into the party, every member active in the existing party auxiliaries and mass organizations, more definite expression of the requirements for membership in the League, definite requirements for entering into its leading bodies, etc. In sum and substance, it can be said that with the acceptance of the report and the proposals made by the National Committee one more important forward step will be recorded. One step toward more clearly defining our purposes, our duties and obligations and to prepare for a more solidly knit body of revolutionists conscious of their tasks and able to carry them out.

The pitiful attempt made by Welsbord to represent himself and his few supporters as a group adhering to the International Left Opposition, and his proposal to send representatives to our conference to discuss what he considered as following from his pretended adherence, namely to "unite" the alleged "two" groups, met with a very stern rebuke from the conference. The resolution adopted unanimously upon this question is printed elsewhere in this issue, suffice only to say that the conference had no time for this imposter pretending to adhere to our movement while at the same time using every opportunity to show that he has nothing in common with our views. Yet the conference did decide to call upon those who may follow Welsbord, those who really have sincere intentions of supporting the Left Opposition to do so by joining our League.

Having settled in a thorough and exhaustive manner all of the main issues presented by the National Committee reports the conference found itself compelled to deal very briefly with other problems arising. For example the Negro question and what is at present

its main immediate aspect viz. the correctness of the slogan of "Right of Self-determination" as well as all the implications which would necessarily flow from such a slogan. While a general consensus of opinion exists within our ranks of deep scepticism in regards to the correctness of this slogan the conference accepted the National Committee on this question. It decided to instruct the National Committee to create a commission which is to make an exhaustive study of this problem in such a way that when a policy is finally arrived at it can be fully motivated and definitely based on Marxian conclusions. Similarly in regards to the specific issues and tasks of the present acute unemployment situation the conference decided to instruct the National Committee to finally elaborate the draft resolution presented.

It can truthfully be said that the first manifestation of the second conference actually marking a real forward step were apparent in the splendid banquet arranged by the New York branch in honor of the conference on Saturday, Sept. 26. A total of 150 plates were set and every place filled with comrades who came to give their enthusiastic indorsement. At several instances the hall virtually rocked with the applause given to the remarks of the speakers when picturing the advance of the Left Opposition and forecasting the future prospects and tasks. Beyond the fondest expectations, and in spite of existing unemployment and economic difficulties, that sentiment was translated into action in a collection of \$207.13 for the future work of the League. Two comrades representing the militant miners of Pennsylvania and Ohio appeared to make an appeal for their fellow workers. They were invited to sit at the banquet and a collection was taken up on their behalf amounting to \$24.85, the contributions being started off with a donation from the National Committee.

Such examples are a telling answer to the Stalinist bureaucrats who have been exuberant in their predictions of collapse to the Left Opposition. But with each such prediction we have appeared stronger. We are stronger in numbers and stronger in influence with constantly growing sympathetic contacts. We have succeeded at this conference in preparing to meet our organizational requirements. All proposals were worked out on the basis of the experiences accumulated. We have made provisions for a stronger and more definitely defined constitution, a beginning toward a functioning staff, more effective use of propaganda and educational material, organiza-

tional tours, utilization of voluntary organizers, recruiting of new members, etc. We have made provisions for much more effective utilization of the many young members who have joined our ranks. A shortcoming of the past, but with prospects of really taking up youth work in the future as it should be taken up.

Conference Achievements

While these may be considered small achievements let us point to the yet more important facts as emerging from the second conference.

1. Our experiences during the longer existence and difficult struggle of the International Left Opposition, the facts of which were assembled and analysed collectively at this conference, has confirmed in all of its major aspects the correctness of our position.
2. Our strength is re-inforced in a developing maturity toward a Marxian evaluation of political and economic processes as well as of the needs and tasks of the revolutionary movement.
3. We are establishing ourselves more firmly and more clearly as a faction of the Communist movement orienting ourselves mainly upon this movement for an uncompromising struggle to restore our party to again become the party of Lenin capable of fulfilling its great historical mission.
4. We are increasingly strengthening ourselves for more active and more direct intervention in the class struggle as a force presenting and fighting for our definite views of strategy and policy to be pursued, be it in the trade union field or elsewhere, be it in regards to a correct conception and practice of the working class united front or other major issues.
5. Our decisions at the second conference, despite any differences of opinion and freely expressed, were arrived at unanimously on all major questions of policy. This itself gives the nearest possible guarantee which can be given for a collectively functioning leadership.
6. We have succeeded in marking one further step toward a broader and more precise understanding and practise of internationalism in a revolutionary sense. The inevitable conclusion flowing from this must be our more active collaboration in the solution of problems of the International Left Opposition movement.
7. With this we feel certain that we can confidently face the future which belongs to the developing world proletarian revolution.

—ARNE SWABECK.