

# Weisbord's Reply to Trotsky's Letter

Comrade Trotsky:  
 The Communist League of Struggle has carefully considered your last letter to our organization. In considering this letter we also had before us the report of our representative, comrade Albert Weisbord who has just returned from his visit to you and to the various sections of the Left Opposition.

We are very happy to note that friendly relations have been able to be established and we feel that much misunderstanding has been wiped away and a practical basis laid for the entrance of our organization into the Left Opposition through unification with the Communist League of America.

Your new letter has, first of all, cleared the ground of a good deal of matter that stood in the way of our mutual coming-together and has taken an entirely different approach to us. No longer are our views so misunderstood that we are charged with deriding publishing work or opposing mass action to propaganda. No longer is the charge made that we are connected with Landau in Europe or with Lovestone in America. In this respect we are also happy to note that many of the reasons given by the leaders of the American League against us, have been ignored by you and thus tacitly repudiated. No longer, for example, is the charge made that we want to help Ghandi in India, that we are opportunist on the question of China, that we belong with the Socialist Party, etc. Quite the contrary we are glad to learn that though the top leaders of the American League aided people who wrecked our headquarters and stole our library and documents and even now welcome these wreckers at their meetings, and though one of these leaders had declared that only the rope could be the medium between us and that we acted as agents blowing the whistle for the police, you have welcomed our representative and in your letter opened the door for entrance into the Left Opposition. On our part we shall do all we can to join forces with the Left Opposition.

First of all we wish to admit that on the question of the Labor Party we made a serious error in that our group had declared in its general theses: "The Communists at this time especially must not drop the slogan of a Labor Party."

Our error was serious in that in calling for the formation of the Labor Party we were making the same error, in a sense, as the Right wing and the Comintern had made in its various adventures in which it had denied the legitimate role of the Party and had acted as coolies for the reformists.

Our group had taken the following position:

1. The Europeanization of American politics must bring about an inevitable and imminent development of a mass party of workers destined to change the political face of the U. S. Historically, such a mass party has taken three forms, namely, a Socialist party, a Communist party, and a Labor party. The question now arises what form is probable as the next step in the political history of the working class in the United States, where there is at present no mass Socialist party or Communist party and where as yet the Labor party does not exist?
2. There is no question that the great sharpening of the inner and outer contradictions of American capitalism gives the basis for a tenseness of relationships, a restiveness of the mass which can enable both Communists and Socialists to grow greatly. It is a fact, however, that despite the great and unprecedented severity of the crisis and of its effects, the American working masses have fought shy of both these parties or have not been effectively reached by them. Such a growth of a revolutionary Communist party is certainly not out of the question this depends both on the sharpening of the capitalist contradictions and the policy of the Communists—nor is the formation of a Labor party inevitable. Nevertheless the existing situation is such that the American workers will be compelled to take independent political action of their own so as to try to counterpose their class interests to those of the bourgeoisie and to strive to ameliorate their conditions. That such political action may very likely take the form of a Labor party can be seen by the great movement for a Labor party which sprung up after the last crisis in the United States in 1921.
3. The formation of a Labor party at the present time would mark a great step forward for the American working class. This is true precisely because the present situation shows it would be formed not due primarily to the great growth of Communism in America which the employers fear and wish to forestall, but primarily as a symptom of the beginning leftward drift of the masses who are still illuded by democracy and still misled by reformists and who form a separate Labor party despite the bourgeoisie. Entirely different from a Socialist party, the Labor party in its inception is really not a Party at all but an amorphous mass movement. In fact, the Labor party, in one sense, can be conceived as an integrated series of united fronts by which the masses launch their own independent struggle against the bourgeoisie on every-day concrete questions. The Labor party although serving as a barrier to Communism yet under the present circumstances sets the masses against the will of its reformist leaders, on the road to overcoming those very barriers of reformism. This amorphous political mass movement called the Labor party serves as an arena within which the Communists can wrest the masses from the reformists."

Where we made our error was in concluding from these premises, the general which we still hold to be correct,

**Statement of the Communist League of Struggle**

It was necessary for the Communists to help organize that Labor Party. What we failed to realize was that the Labor party was an amorphous mass movement that rapidly became a PARTY, that it was more than an integrated series of united fronts but a PARTY, or to put it another way, we failed to realize that in INTEGRATING this series of united fronts we were creating another PARTY, reformist and dual to the Communist. We failed to understand that all united fronts created by us must be specific and definite, while a Labor party is a PERMANENT organization with aims that vary, an organization that with the masses carries an entirely different meaning than ordinary united front. In this respect your recent article on the Labor party question has proved of great value in correcting these errors in the position of the Communist League of Struggle.

It is no more the task of the American Communists to organize a petty-bourgeois Party standing between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in the form of a Labor party, than it would have been for the Chinese Communists to have helped organize the Kuo Min Tang in China. The Kuo Min Tang also symbolized the Europeanization of politics—Chinese politics—and it also historically marked a progressive step forward for the Chinese masses and provided an arena for Communism (as indeed it might be conceived that even the creation of a Socialist party might do in some countries) yet history has decisively shown us what criminality it would be if the formation of such a Kuo Min Tang (or hypothetical Socialist party) were due to the actions and propaganda of the Communist themselves.

A party exists for the seizure of power. Every worker knows that. To ask him to organize a Labor Party is inevitably to give him the conception that the Labor party is the instrument for seizure of power. Such a conception paves the way for all the monstrous crimes committed by Stalinism and the Right wing.

However, we must declare that in your letter to us we believe you have criticized us too severely. You must know that for over two years, up to very recently, the Communist League of America also had the same slogans as we did on the Labor party question, changing its thesis only at its last national conference. Yet all that time, the Labor party question was not considered a decisive one, capable of barring a group from the Left Opposition and it was not, therefore, because of this question that the Communist League of America or the International Secretariat at first rejected collaboration with us. For the first time, then, through your letter to us, we have learned that you considered this question a decisive one.

In respect to this matter of "decisive questions" permit us to add that there are other questions which we consider decisive and which you should put to the American League. To mention only two of these questions: Is it so "decisive" that a League should be run by people who voluntarily turn over the names and addresses of members and sympathizers, subscribers to their paper, to the United States government? Is it not "decisive" that on such a burning question in the United States as the Negro question, the American League now for close to four years has taken no official position, taking the ground it must "study the question" (great consolation to the struggling Negro masses)? Certainly all questions can be "decisive" once they are developed and expanded upon and brought into general relation with the general theoretical program of the organization. But what must be kept in mind in relation to the Labor party question in America is:

1. There was no large-scale movement for a Labor party actually being organized and that our error therefore was concerning a contingency rather than an actuality and this made it easier for us to fall into error.
2. It was never the position of the Communist League of Struggle to behave even remotely as Stalin in acting as the coolie for the Kuo Min Tang. We have constantly stressed the necessity and historic independent role of the Communist party. It was our intention to utilize the Labor party movement for the building up of a strong Communist party that would soon liquidate and make antiquated the Labor party subordinate to it. We never had the theory that "hand in hand with the Kuo Min Tang" (or Labor party) we would accomplish the revolution. For us the Labor party was no substitute for a Communist party. Rather have we constantly stressed that only by a relentless fight against the opportunism embodied in a Labor party would the workers be able to cross over the bridge the Labor party offered them, and move to the Proletarian Revolution.
3. However, since the Labor party was not actually formed we were not able to show in practice how entirely different our whole conception and action was from that of the Right wing.

Finally we must declare our confusion on the question of the Labor party was also due to the fact that the Comintern in the time of Lenin had taken a position similar to ours not only in regard to Great Britain but specifically and concretely in regard to America and the American Labor Party. In the light of these specific decisions of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International which we believed correct we felt we could not change our views at least without a long and thorough discussion with

the leading sections of the International Left Opposition, which we have only just now had the opportunity to have. We cannot be condemned for being late in reviving our views when you yourself have only recently written on the subject, not having mentioned it even in your first letter to us.

We cannot leave this important question of the Labor party without calling attention to several errors in the position of the Communist League of America. The American League, in its last thesis, has declared that the question of a Labor party has less of a timely significance than in the past. How can this position be reconciled with your opinion that the question of the Labor party has now become decisive for the American groups adhering to the Left Opposition? Does the American League believe that the Europeanization of American politics which you have stressed as imminent will take only the form of mass Socialist and Communist parties as in Germany? Such an analysis is far from a realistic appreciation of the American situation at the present time and is far from being born out of the facts. The Communist League of Struggle wishes here to reiterate its view that far from being less important, the Labor party question will tend to become even more and more important in the ranks of the working class.

You declare in your statement on the Labor party question that you cannot affirm that the creation of a Labor party would be a progressive step in the United States because you do not know under what circumstances such a party would be created. It is also our position as well as yours that even if it were objectively a progressive step it is not our duty to help organize such a party, or proclaim its progressiveness, but on the contrary, its insufficiency ambiguity and limitedness and its historical role as a hindrance to the proletarian revolution. Nevertheless the question goes deeper than a tactical one. The question stands in what historical period in American politics are we in America at the present time? You imply that the more probable perspective in America is the huge growth of a Communist party putting such pressure on the employing class that the Labor party would be organized by capitalist elements solely as a weapon against the Communist party.

We believe such an analysis is not correct. Certainly there are great possi-

bilities, never utilized by the Stalinists, for the large growth of the Communist party, in the U. S., but certainly also in the light of present day facts and conditions in America we can not agree that the most probable perspective to which we can turn is that the Labor party, like the Zubatov Unions under the Czar, will be organized mainly as a deliberate move against Communism. As we see American conditions today (tomorrow may compel another analysis based on new world events) we can declare that out of the great complex of social forces leading to the formation of a Labor party, the primary leading force will be the movement of the working class to the left on the road of independent political class action against the capitalists and even if such a movement were to have in it capitalist elements who are primarily concerned in utilizing the Labor party, against Stalinism and even if those conscious anti-Communist elements were dominant, yet the Labor party movement itself would be unleashing those very forces destined to overthrow all anti-Communist plans. To conceive of the Labor party primarily as a movement carefully controlled by capitalists and formed to meet the menace of Communism rather than primarily as a spontaneous movement of the workers against the capitalists is to distort the picture. Taking such a view, we believe it was incorrect for the American League to make it merely an "open question" whether, under such circumstances the Communists should participate and work within the Labor party.

Of course, as the Labor party is not organized yet in America, this is music of the future. Yet we wish to call to your attention that the American League has taken an un-Leninist position on the whole question of the united front, even though on the Labor party question the American League did reach a correct conclusion. We have, for example, reported to you how, contrary to your opinion, the American League is against the idea that the Communists in India should enter the Indian National Revolutionary Congress; how, contrary to your opinion, the American League failed to send delegates to general united front meetings called by labor organizations outside the Communist party and how it failed to organize united fronts where possible. If we have erred on the Labor party question, it was also because we zealously wished that the Left Opposition in America actively participate in the life of the American working class and enter into all its concrete battles.

(To be continued)

# The Elections in Greece

**Left Opposition Holds Aloft Banner of International Communism**

The beginning of this year witnessed an intensification of the crisis in Greece, with no prospect of amelioration, since the main revenues of the country: exportation of tobacco and raisins, drafts from the immigrants of America decreased and its main industry, shipping, is crippled by the lack of world trade.

Premier Venizelos, the famous lackey of British and French imperialism, vainly appealed to his masters for a loan in order to meet the payments of amortization and interest on the State's debts. In spite of his dramatic appeals (possibility of a Communist dictatorship in case he falls) his masters did not need his services as they did during the war and after, when he enthusiastically supported the French General Staff with a few Greek divisions in order to help crush our proletarian fatherland; and therefore they totally ignored him.

The Bolshevik-Leninists (Archio-Marxists) of Greece issued a Manifesto last March to the party and the working class outlining the events that took place in May with a correct Marxist prognosis and stressing the necessity of uniting the working class in workers' councils in order to resist effectively the capitalist offensive. The Stalinists refused any kind of co-operation and criminally neglected to undertake any sort of preparation. The Stalinists confined their activities to pointing to the police many militant Oppositionists, and asking the capitalist landowners to remove from the prison cell, lecturers every Archio-Marxist, including some invalid comrades. Their sole concern is the creation of artificial barriers between the workers of the party and the Oppositionists.

In the meantime the financial crisis sharpened and Venizelos was forced on April 25th to abandon the gold basis of the drachma and immediately an inflation took place with the obvious result of sending the prices of foodstuffs to the sky without a corresponding increase of wages. The working masses were unable to purchase even bread. Dissatisfaction was brewing among the workers, poor farmers, and state employees and the Opposition again urged the Stalinists to form workers' councils, but to no avail.

On May 25 many spontaneous uprisings took place in the spontaneous sections of the country, trains were halted and looted by peasants. The reformists called a general strike which embraced even the State employees. Venizelos was forced to resign and his successor Papanastassiou the leader of the Papanastassiou and Farmers' Party, got the co-operation of the reformists and called off the general strike, as was expected. Squadrism of the British and French fleet rushed to the Greek waters ready for any emergency. Papanastassiou was removed by the big bourgeoisie as soon as the crisis passed its danger point. Venizelos undertook again the premiership promising to the masses a general election for September 25.

Factory after factory closed its gates and thus tens of thousands of workers were added to the unemployed list. Even the Government's public works, the so-called productive works, aimed to absorb part of the unemployed, were discontinued. This unprecedented crisis embraced the petty-bourgeoisie also and not convinced by the timid and capitulating attitude of the party, it is beginning to orientate itself towards the Monarchists.

The Popular Party of Tsaldaris (monarchist) launched a vigorous campaign and so far is making great inroads in the camp of the agrarian masses also.

The progressives under Kafandaris and Papanastassiou's Workers' and Farmers' Party are opposing for obvious reasons the Venizelos Party where formerly they themselves belonged. Also a new party has appeared on the political scene, the Agrarian Party, led by reformist elements.

The big bourgeoisie aims with these theatrical combinations to deceive the masses by drawing the attention of the latter from their severe misery and orienting their attention to an election struggle not based upon the class struggle but based upon the class struggle to revive the old political passions not upon the class struggle but upon the question of the king and "democracy". The prospects of a Royalist landslide similar to the one of 1920 are not at all likely.

The only revolutionary party on the political arena is the Communist Party of Greece, even though it conceals itself behind the banner of a so-called "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc." In spite of the confused and opportunistic form of its platform the Marxian criticism of it by the Archio-Marxists, the Left Oppositionists of Greece are conducting a vigorous campaign among the workers and poor farmers of Greece. The Stalinists have resorted for support to every discredited element in the labor movement and some paper unions, but refuse so far to accept the support of the Left Opposition in the election campaign. The Archio-Marxists called mass meetings throughout Greece urging the workers to support the candidates of the Communist party and appealing to the party members to exercise their pressure on the bureaucrats to stop this criminal attitude.

We are sure that the party members in many sections of Greece will follow the revolutionary example of the district of Lesbos and thus succeed in winning the majority of the working class and poor farmers from the clutches of the reformists and other reactionary elements. Last year, the candidate of the Communist party of the island of Lesbos, comrade Achilles Contaros, accepted the support of the Archio-Marxists and succeeded in polling one-third of the total

## Unity Urgent Need of Illinois Miners

(Continued from page 1)

to each individual branch of the Socialist party in the Illinois coal fields, to make any decision that the branch may see fit. Such is the "leadership" that the Socialist party gives the workers. Of course, the real purpose of such a decision is to help Walker-Lewis and the coal-operators to put over the wage cut. And the leading members of the Socialist party in the Illinois coal fields understand clearly the purpose and are loyally carrying out the decision of the National Committee of the Socialist party.

John Hindmarsh, leading member of the Socialist party in Illinois and a benchman of the Walker-Lewis machine was thrown out by rank and file miners from his local union because he tried to force the miners to accept the wage cut and go back to work under the Lewis-Walker company union. Richard Glover, member of the Socialist party and Editor of the Illinois Miner, the official mouthpiece of the Walker-Lewis union, is also very active in trying to put over the wage-cut for the Peabody Coal Co. Then there is Jack Reed, member of the Springfield Socialist party and one of the members of the Lewis-Walker scale committee that made up the contract which the miners are now fighting against. Reed voted for the wage-cut and signed the present outrageous contract. He has refused again and again to face the miners of Springfield and explain why he did not carry out the instructions of the miners of Springfield. Then again, there is Adolph Germer, one of the leading Socialists in the state of Illinois and Editor of Rockford, Ill., Labor News. He, too, is very active in trying to defeat the miners in their fight against the combination of the Lewis-Walker and the coal-operators. Such is the role of the leading members of the Socialist party, true agents of the coal-operators in the ranks of the workers.

**Communist Party**

Due to the incorrect policies pursued by the official Communist party leadership, the party has been unable to unite the miners under the banner of class struggle. Instead of consistently and systematically trying to build united fronts with allies, sympathizers and supporters of the Communists and the Left wing, in order to defeat the main enemy, the American Stalinists, consistently and systematically attack every individual and drive them further away from Communism. The result of their incorrect bureaucratic policy, is isolation from the miners to such a point that the miners will not even listen to their proposals. The Stalinists have only one miner who is really active in the new miners' union and he doesn't dare to come out openly and declare himself a member of the Communist party.

The miners have great forces against them, yet the spirit and militancy of the Illinois miners was never as great as it is to-day. They have been winning some kind of a victory from the coal-operators almost every day. The struggle has not yet reached its height. It will probably be a long drawn-out struggle. Quite a number of the small independent coal operators have signed up with the Progressive Miners Union, yet the key to the whole Illinois mine situation is Franklin and Williamson counties. If the P. M. U. can break the power of Lewis in these two counties, then Lewis' union is done throughout the country. And I believe there is a good chance to break the hold of Lewis in these two counties—the conditions under which the miners of Franklin and Williamson counties must work will force the miners themselves to fight. The important thing is to keep the mines that are out on strike solid. —JOE ANGELO

## Outcome of the Belgian Miners' Strike

The Belgian working-class is at present engaged in one of the greatest and most important struggles it has witnessed for years. The whole mining proletariat is striking! To understand the full importance of this fact, it is sufficient to remember that the coal-mining industry in Belgium is one of the most important of all.

For months, the owners, encouraged and supported by the social trade union leaders' apathy and consent, were applying successive cuts in wages. Most of the miners, moreover, were but working four or five days a week. Notwithstanding all the dangers of their work, the miners and their families were literally driven to poverty and want.

This situation couldn't last and when a new cut was to be applied, the strike broke out in several pits of the Borinage. The trade union leaders did not advocate the extension of the strike, but, passing ahead of their leaders' treacherous advice, the miners of the rank and file, in the local sections of their trade unions, unanimously voted for the strike and its extension to the other districts and industries.

This elementary mass movement was not foreseen by the leaders, and it wasn't conducted by them, it was imposed upon them by the fighting will of the miners themselves. All that was left to the reformists was to follow, and so they did, trying by all means to regain over the miners the control that had slipped out of their hands.

**Strike Extends**

The strike was extending rapidly. Without any direction at all, the miners, men and women, occupied the streets, marching and cycling from one mining village to another, to cease work. In a few days, all activity was stopped in the whole district of the Borinage, the Center and Charleroi, including the metallurgical works, glass factories, tramwaymen, etc., and the strike was extending to wards Liege and Brussels. But this magnificent mass movement of solidarity of all workers towards their brother miners, was to be brutally cut off by the socialist leaders' treason whose tactics it always was to divide the working class in struggle, including it to fight separately for its own special claims. Indeed, as the metal workers arrived at a partial agreement with the bosses as to their wages, and as some promises were made to the miners, the trade union leaders ordered the men back to work and all workers, except the miners, obeyed, being faced with the threat of not receiving any strike indemnities.

By now, still more than 100,000 miners are on strike, some of them since more than two months, but their fight is brought to a deadlock and their chance of victory greatly endangered by the socialist's maneuvers.

From the beginning of the strike, the repression of the bourgeois government brutally prevailed. Police forces, gendarmery and troops were massed in the mining districts, preventing manifestations, savagely provoking and even killing several workmen during street riots. Especially fierce were the searches and arrests directed against all those suspected of Communism. Several members

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**NEXT ISSUE**

The next issue of the Militant will contain another one of the articles in the series forming the new book on Germany by comrade Leon Trotsky, "The Only Road". The forthcoming chapter is entitled:

**The Twenty-One Mistakes of Thaelmann**