

# Weisbord's Reply to Trotsky's Letter

(Continued from last issue)

On the general question of Centrism, we feel that our differences are not very great and in some respects are only of a formal character. In giving the name "centrism" only to those groupings which occupy the place between the official camps of reformism (social democracy) and the official camp of Communism, we have used the term precisely as Lenin used it. However here the whole question seems to be one of name and we do not wish to quarrel over that.

What we emphatically deny is the implications in your statement that "we were concerned to effect the difference between the official party, the Right wing fraction (Lovestone group) and even the American League" and the further statement. "This makes it easy for you to remain in an eclectic position and defend your right of a bloc with the Lovestone group."

First of all, it is not true that we do not distinguish between the Right wing and the Party. We consider ourselves a fraction of the PARTY and not of the Right wing. In the very beginning of the organization of our tendency, in January 1931, in his debate with one of the American League, our representative declared:

"It is true there is a difference between the Communist Party (Stalin-Browder-Foster faction) and the Communist Party (Majority group) Bucharin-Brandier-Lovestone faction. These differences can be summarized broadly as follows: 1. The "official Communist Party" has more members, more good militant fighters who must be won over, has more influence in the radical movement, etc. 2. The opportunism of the Communist Party takes on a different form from that of the C. P. (Majority group). 3. The tempo of development of their opportunism differs. These differences the Communist League (Opposition) must take into consideration. Its tactics must be to stress the winning of the ranks and file of the Communist Party for there are the principal ranks of the militants today."

What we wish to affirm is that Stalinism, or "Bureaucratic Centrism" is also on the whole a form of centrism that is to the right of Leninism, in spite of ultra-Left zigzags, and is moving toward Reformism. The fact that Stalinism rests upon the Soviet bureaucracy still tied to the workers by the frame of the proletarian revolution in the Soviet Union means that on the one hand this centrism has a more permanent base than the ordinary forms of centrism which are by their very nature ephemeral and transient, and that, on the other hand, it will be a tendency capable of movements of yielding to the pressure of the working class and thus having leftward zig-zag peculiarities.

If we ask whether Bureaucratic Centrism is more to the right or to the left of the Right wing, our answer must depend on a concrete analysis of the given time and place and set of circumstances and not on an abstract generality. Certainly it would be most mechanical and formalistic to declare, as the American League has done, that everywhere Stalinism is a tendency between us and the Right wing. The problem is not quite the same in Sweden as in Russia, in Germany as in America. A dialectical approach to this question must be a concrete one.

In regard to the question whether the Right wing of Communism is dynamically further away from Marxism than Left Socialists this depends on concrete circumstances in which we must examine (a) the direction, (b) the tempo, (c) the distance covered by the different groups, on the roads which they have elected to travel. You yourself declare that under a normal regime in the Comintern, Right wing Communists would not be expelled from the Communist Party, and it is a moot point to be determined concretely whether the fact of the expulsion of the Right wing, etc., has forced it into such a position that it can no longer be taken back into a Communist Party or considered nearer to us than Socialists.

And here we must emphatically emphasize the fact that we have never proposed a BLOC with the Right wing (Lovestonettes), meaning by a bloc a general value alliance. In our general thesis we wrote: "In the meantime the Communist League of Struggle must try to effect a united front so that all Communist groups can work together on concrete issues on the basis of the recognition of the Communist character of each group. This will also help to re-establish mass work, to resist the violent tactics of the party officialdom, and to place the Communist groups on a correct path."

When, some time later, Lovestone issued a call for "Communist Unity" we replied (Class Struggle Vol. II, No. 4, April 1932). "But first of all we want to ask Lovestone: FOR WHAT do you want to unite? To fight the organization of the unorganized as you are doing everywhere? To destroy the new unions such as the textile? To cover up the fakers such as you did in Paterson and elsewhere? Is it for this that you want unite? . . . Are you not like Kautsky and the other opportunists in your shouts for unity without specifying on what program and on what basis? . . ."

It is not clear, from these quotations, that in our struggle against the terrible disintegration taking place within the ranks of the Communists, that we proposed a united front not with the Right wing alone but with all Communist groups, and not a general vague alliance, but only on specified concrete questions? Further it is recognized by everyone here that in a number of instances we alone actually fought against the Right wing when the Communist League of America was not even present.

We are in accord with you when you write "To conclude a bloc with the Lovestone group would mean to augment its

## Statement of the Communist League of Struggle

general authority and by that to help it to fulfill its reactionary historic mission." We are also of the opinion that it is not for us to raise into prominence the question of a united front with an organization such as the Right wing which in America is barren and without masses. However, it is quite possible that circumstances may arise where it will be advantageous for us to form a united front including the Right wing even where the Party refuses to join or even fights it. Here again it is the concrete circumstances that decide. (The fact that the Communist League of America finally was forced to organize such a united front (Marine case) is proof of the correctness of our position.)

In our general thesis we have declared that the Communist League of America also was a Right wing organization. We reached this conclusion on the basis of its first thesis and actions. Since the time of our criticism the Communist League of America has made some steps in correcting its past errors but its general practice, its methods of correction, its last general theses, its present unprincipled internal factional fight, etc., show that it has a long way yet to go really to deserve being part of the International Left Opposition.

We wish to raise the general question: Is it impossible for a group to agree to certain formulae of the Left Opposition and yet fill these formulae with such a Right wing content as to nullify them? Such a situation can readily result from the present general weakness of the Left Opposition. Under such conditions it is quite possible for groups to sign general international declarations and yet annul them in their national practice.

It is not correct to say that our serious charges against the leadership of the Communist League of America, which we believe are based on facts and which we stand ready to prove when necessary, and our criticism of the Communist League of America made us an enemy of the International Left Opposition. Quite the contrary, it was because we wished to further the interests of the International Left Opposition that we made this criticism. Certainly comrade Trotsky, you must recognize that without a congress, without a strong and authoritative political bureau, the International Left Opposition has not pressed its sections sufficiently to carry into effect its principles that the sections must behave as Communist sections in the struggles of the workers, and that propaganda must be put forth not in a sectarian manner but on the basis of active proletarian in the entire life of the proletariat.

In this respect permit us to state that we have endorsed the organizational statutes worked out by our representative, comrade Weisbord, during his discussions with you and that we are sending you further a special report on the condition of the sections of the International Left Opposition embodying certain recommendations that we believe can aid the situation.

Finally we must declare the actions of the Communist League of America have materially contributed to the sharpness of our criticism. Our collaboration has been steadily rejected, no aid given us when our class enemies attacked us, we have been ridiculed in a most vulgar

and low manner, our headquarters has been raided and partially wrecked, we have been denounced as agents for the police, etc. Do you believe we could reply to these provocations without sharpness? On the other hand never have we taken a sharp tone to the views of the International Left Opposition itself, although the Secretariat, under Miller, behaved toward us in an extremely hostile and unwarranted manner.

III. It is on the question of mass work, a most important question to us active Communists used to field work, whose very life medium is the working class to which we are indissolubly bound, it is on this question that we most heartily welcome your statement: "I am ready to admit that your group would be able in that respect to complete the work of the American League." What an enormous difference between this statement and the attitude of the leaders of the Communist League of America? It was this false view of the leaders of the Communist League which more than anything else, we believe, has alienated many honest workers and Communists from the Left Opposition of the U. S.

In this connection permit me to stress the fact that the leadership of the American League in pursuing the sectarian policies (sectarian in the worst sense of the word) has been guilty not merely of failing to apply principles which it did not "theoretically" deny, but of gross theoretical errors as well, errors totally in disharmony with the Left Opposition and which only strengthened its false line.

In agreeing with you that we can complete the work of the American League we do not wish to deny that in the course of existence we have made some serious errors both in our general program (for example on the Labor Party question, our mistake in allowing the impression to get abroad that we wished a bloc with the Right wing, and our mistake in ignoring on certain questions the great critical activity already done by the Left Opposition, etc.) and in our practice. However we do affirm that you must recognize that on the whole we are part of the Left Opposition and belong inside it. You write that we "must keep clearly in mind that the road to the International Left Opposition leads through the American League." We have always fought for closer relations with the American League. As long ago as December 31, 1931 we made the following proposals to the American League:

"1. That joint membership meetings be held to discuss the differences between both organizations . . .

"2. That special place be allotted in both the Class Struggle and the Militant for articles from representatives of both groups . . .

"3. That opportunity be given in the Forums conducted by both groups for speakers of each group to state their positions . . .

"4. That both organizations cooperate as closely as possible in all united front activities and rally to mutual defence when attacked by capitalist forces . . . In all united fronts it is necessary not only to separate Communism from Menshevism as a whole but to separate the Communists of the right from those who adhere to the views of the International Left Opposition. In all united fronts where other labor organizations are present, both groups should strive to effect a unified policy agreeable to both groups and to act as a unit."

We believe that in the framework of the Left Opposition we shall be able, in a loyal and helpful way, to struggle for that viewpoint which can round out the work of the American Section and help it live up to its historic mission. We ask that you and the various sections of the Left Opposition aid us in this task.

We cannot close without expressing our warm appreciation for the hospitable and friendly reception given our representative, and for the autographed photograph and greetings which you have sent us. We are confident that our discussions will substantially contribute to our formal entrance into the ranks of the Bolshevik-Leninists.

—Communist League of Struggle.

## P.M.U. Under Sharp Attack

(Continued from page 1)

here clubbing, beating of women and children and intimidation of all kinds are rife, a reign of terror similar to Britain's Blacks and Tans during the Irish revolution. The bosses will know that to lose these counties will change the picture of the miners, will bring the miners from the defensive to the offensive and open up a new phase of the class struggle. In all towns, mass meetings are being held and when the speakers call for a return to Franklin Co. there is vociferous applause.

The Leland Hotel in Springfield is the headquarters of Lewis and his open gunmen who are imported from all parts of the country. Six striking miners were shot by those thugs at Braidwood Thursday as they were sitting by the roadside. In their frenzy at the growth of the new union the bosses stop at nothing.

From New York, while Lewis was negotiating with the anthracite operators to put over a 25% reduction in the wages of the hard coal miners, he sent a telegram to one Charles Bohanan, hand picking him as president of a local here. The telegram was most laudatory of Bohanan's rare qualities, honesty, integrity, and loyalty to the U. M. W. A. Only it didn't work. Bohanan came with the telegram to the P. M. A. headquarters saying that he couldn't be head of Lewis has but few tricks left.

The Militant is playing an important role in this battle. It is the only revolutionary organ with a correct policy in the field. The more militant and Left wing miners persevere and fight for the policy it proposes, one that the new union must follow if it is going to march on the road to victory by broadening the united front as proposed by the Communist League of America. The Left Opposition is continuously gaining in prestige because it carries the banner of Communism aloft. The task would be easier but for the blunders of the Stalinist bureaucracy. Despite everything we forge ahead.

—CARMODY.

## RUSSIAN BULLETIN

The two latest issues of the Russian Bulletin have just arrived. These are numbers 28 and 29-30. Both numbers are extremely important ones, dealing with the latest developments in Soviet economy, the situation in the Communist International and the activities of the

We ask all comrades to send their orders in immediately, since there are only a limited number of each issue on hand. Orders for copies of the Russian Bulletin should be accompanied with cash. The price per bulletin is twenty-five cents.

# Congress at Amsterdam

(Continued from page 2)

"1. The comrades of the Greek organizations, because of police and financial difficulties, had to forego sending one of their own active members to this Congress: they sent their credentials to comrades of their political tendency, and it is in the name of the thousands of workers grouped around them that we express ourselves here.

"2. On the question of the fight against war, the Greek veterans, the wounded, the revolutionary workers have a doctrine based on the revolutionary action of those among them who, when sent in 1917 and 1918 into Soviet Russia, fraternized with the Red Army which breathed life into the Communist anti-war concept: the transformation of the imperialist war into a civil war, under the guidance of Lenin and Trotsky.

"3. On the convocation of this Congress, we consider that it can have positive results only to the degree to which it can disengage itself from these debates, we think that peace depends on civil war, that civil war depends upon the proletariat's capacity for action, and that this capacity for action depends basically upon the unity, the strength and the correct orientation of its vanguard. That is why we assert that it is the duty of the C. I., which was born in the struggle against the socialist betrayal of 1914, to take the initiative in summoning a general congress of all proletarian organizations, in order to make the masses deceived by social patriotism and pacifism come over into the camp of defeatism and civil war. This road outlined by Lenin and Trotsky is the road we urge.

"4. In the series of debates, this Congress has uncovered fatal wants. Pacifism must be condemned and those who intend to defend the U. S. S. R. with their lives must be separated from those who seek notoriety by talk about its defense. The weakening of capitalism, the proletarian dictatorship, the true defense of the U. S. S. R. are subordinated to that.

"5. The organizations we represent asserted their concept by giving their credentials to this Congress to two men whom the repression against their intransigent revolutionary struggle has denied admittance to this Congress.

"One of them was for several years Soviet Russia's ambassador to Paris; but French imperialism, the bloodhound of the counter-revolution, demanded his recall because Christian Rakovsky signed a manifesto urging the conversion of imperialist war into civil war.

"The second was Lenin's companion in arms in the decisive moments of 1917—Trotsky, who vitalized the proletariat's answer to war by organizing and leading the Red Army to victory.

"These two names, the names of thousands of Russian Bolshevik-Leninists—are the expression of the program we urge upon the Congress—Loyalty to Leninism."

Every word of Molinier's speech was clearly heard. The consistent Communists of the French delegation, who had acclaimed or tolerated Patel and Dabiet could not for long tolerate the voice of the Left Opposition; they drowned out its end with hisses.

The slanderous Bulletin of the Congress relates this speech as follows:

"Molinier, who had credentials from the Greek war veterans, despite every effort of the Presidium members, did not succeed in making himself heard above the uproar which the assembly made as

a sign of protest. Molinier, a French Trotskyist, attempted, by attacks against the 2nd International, to justify his proposal—the unification of the two internationals. Molinier's speech ended in an indignant clamor.

"Dima Kopoulos got on the tribunal and announced that Molinier was not a delegate of the Greek war veterans nor of any other organization. He protested against Molinier's speech in the name of these Greek comrades. (Vigorous applause.)"

It is well to note that the proposal attributed by a slanderous cynic to Molinier actually was made at the Congress. The proposal was made by Nicole, and it received the vigorous applause of the French delegation. As for Kopoulos' provocative speech, it was an impudent slander which had to be disposed of immediately before Miglioli. Justice was dealt out by the Credentials Committee, which could not—and for good reason—contest the credentials of the Greek organizations. After this speech, Barbusse took the floor for a short time and said he was opposed to "the action he had undertaken under the power of any party or fraction of a party." This speech, which signaled the obliteration of the Communist party in the anti-war struggle, the French comrades, in their blindness, applauded as hard as they could.

## THE CONGRESS APPARATUS RUNS AWAY WITH THE "FINAL VOTE"

On the last day of the Congress, the sequence of speeches was brusquely interrupted by the announcement that the Presidium was going into session. The manifesto drawn by Barbusse, who was convinced in advance that the Congress must close with a unanimous act, had been distributed the night before. The Presidium just barely brought itself to a few stylistic corrections which were to ratify the agreement between Patel and Muenzenberg, between Madame Duchene and Cachin, between Fonteny and Katayama. Barbusse read the document. The Left Opposition's delegation, which had never ceased to protest against the gagging of the discussion and the pacifist confusion of the proceedings, was grouped around the foot of the tribunal, where it vigorously demanded a discussion and the reading of the resolution it had submitted.

It was surrounded by the strong-arm squad, which endeavored forcibly to impose silence upon it. In the tumult, they proceeded to a vote by show of hands. The comrades of the Left Opposition, arrayed in vigorous protest, demanded the negative vote; the six votes of the Left Opposition were the only ones cast against the Barbusse manifesto. The delegation immediately submitted a statement explaining its vote. These votes, delivered before the entire Congress, were recorded in the Congress Bulletin and in Monde. Up to this very day the official party press has concealed them from the workers. This vote is the first wound from which will ultimately perish the paralyzed confusionist apparatus for the action of the proletariat against imperialist war and against the capitalist class that was constituted by the Barbusse-Muenzenberg Congress, Paris, September 1932

## VOTE COMMUNIST!

# JAPAN

## Its Rise from Feudalism to Capitalist Imperialism and the Development of the Proletariat

By Jack Weber

When Marx and Engels issued the "Communist Manifesto" in 1848, Japan was still in its dark ages of feudalism, shut in as a hermit nation to hold back the threatening inundation by the rising tide of world economy. Today we must amplify the first sentence of the "Manifesto." Less than a century after its issuance, a scant sixty-four years after the beginning of the modern era in Japan, the spectre of Communism haunts Asia as well as Europe. And in fact the spectre has materialized and taken on flesh and stands with a foot in either continent, so that even as Japan reaches maturity as a world capitalist power, world economy already includes within itself at least the framework of a more advanced stage of society.

Under the direct influence of the "independent reality of world economy", Japan, the last of the powers to abolish feudalism, has itself become one of the capitalist powers. The unprecedented speed with which this process occurred has been the admiration of those bourgeois writers who attribute the "success" of Japanese capitalism to the planful foresight of its ruling class. An examination of this planned economy will throw light on the present relation of forces in Japan and will serve to contrast Japanese with Soviet Russian planned economy. A picture of feudal and post-feudal Japan will not come amiss as a starting point.

**The Feudal Period**  
When in 1853 Commodore Perry knocked at the gates of Japan with his cannon balls in the Bay of Uraga, ordering them opened in the name of the rapidly expanding American capitalism, he found Japan in the rotten-ripeness of a stagnant feudalism. More than two centuries earlier a new shogun (the Emperor's chamberlain) had brought to a close the period of perennial warfare between

the peasant producers. The great feudal lords, the heads of great clans, called daimyos numbered 437 at the end of the era. There were 420,000 samurais or military retainers whose families and servants brought the number of non-producers entirely dependent on the lords to well over one million. The entire population numbered 27,000,000, the vast majority peasants.

Despite the intense exploitation of the peasantry, the daimyos, with few exceptions, could not maintain their establishments without deficits met by borrowing from the rising merchant class. Frequently enough the debts were wiped out by the simple expedient of confiscation of the entire wealth of the rich merchant. The samurais were so deeply in debt that general repudiations of debts were common. Thus the shogun declared all debts of samurais null and void in 1716.

Evidently money economy was growing up side by side with the barter economy. The money economy whose beginnings traced back many centuries in Japan, secured a firm hold through foreign trade, although barter continued to exist side by side with it up to 1875 when the system of expressing wealth in terms of bushels of rice was abandoned. In fact trade had not ceased with the decree of seclusion. Down to 1700 the Dutch exported from Japan a total of 100,000,000 lbs. of copper. At the end of the 18th century they were still exporting 800,000 lbs. a year and the Chinese were then sending to China from Japan 1-2 million lbs. a year. Several "progressive" feudal lords were enriched by engaging in this trade.

**The Peasants**  
Terrible as had been the lot of the peasants before the Tokugawa era their sufferings became indescribable during this period. "Even in normal times, the peasants did not have enough to live on. They ate the cheaper grains and potatoes, and very seldom tasted the rice they produced, for it was taken away as tax, and what little was left them had to be sold to get necessary money."

Under feudal economy crop shortages were the most frightful calamity (just as over-abundance for the market is the contradictory capitalist calamity). From 1690 to 1840 there were 22 famines,—very destructive of human life. The famines

were caused by floods, droughts, frosts, typhoons, volcanoes, insects,—but the suffering was due to the low stage of social organization, a stage in which ease of communication is not desired and roads are made impassable to prevent invasion by neighboring enemies. Desperation often drove the peasants to riot for rice. Fifty such riots are recorded. Five riots of national scope occurred between 1830 and 1846.

Such poverty and misery kept the population stationary throughout this period. It is recorded indeed that during the first decade of the 19th century the peasant population decreased by 1,400,000 due primarily to deaths by starvation, although a small part of this decrease was due to the fleeing of peasants to the towns. Under such conditions infanticide was so common that in many districts only boys were raised and in others it was the custom to kill 2 out of every 5 babies. Near Nagano the large rock still stands where old women past the age of usefulness were exposed to die.

## The Restoration

The most powerful rivals of the Tokugawas were the wealthy Choshu and Satsuma clans, both near the seacoast and both of whom has learned more of the arts of the West than any other groups in Japan. Just before the abolition of the feudal system the Satsumas had imported the latest cotton spinning machinery with 6000 spindles from England, thereby starting the first great industry in Japan. These clans headed a revolt for the overthrow of the decadent Tokugawas and for the restoration of the Emperor, nominal overlord for many centuries, around whom had grown the usual numerous myths of divinity. Unwittingly, Com. Perry, by his "visit" helped these clans end the shogunate.

**The New Feudalist Bureaucracy**  
Lengthy as this historical outline may appear, it is essential to an intelligent understanding of modern Japan. In the Tokugawa regime, control was exercised by a feudal bureaucracy with the much heralded Restoration of the Emperor in change in form but remained exactly the same in essence, as it had to since the ruling class had not changed. The Emperor still remained a figurehead for

state religious purposes, the actual power passing over to the new militarists of the successful clans, the Choshu and the Satsuma in particular. The daimyos and the samurais of these clans formed the new bureaucracy that ushered in capitalism under the leadership of feudal lords. Feudalism was abolished but the lords, now peers of the realm, retained most of their land and were compensated by a bond issue for the small part relinquished, and the samurais were granted a state pension as well as a sum of money outright. Feudalism was abolished but military dictatorship remains to this day. To the victors belong the spoils and so from 1868 to 1912 the samurais of the Choshu clan had complete control of the modern conscript army which they organized. Almost invariably the generals have been Choshu. Similarly the Satsumas, who had to play second fiddle because of a premature attempt to invade and annex Korea, era navy. Almost every admiral has been a Satsuma. With minor exceptions these clans contributed between them the membership of that extra-constitutional body, the Genro or Elder Statesmen, who do not give counsel but dictate his policy to the Emperor. True, elements of democracy exist today in Japan but it need only be recalled that the male workers (over 25) were granted the vote only in 1926, exercising this right for the first time in 1928, to realize the role played by the military bureaucracy at the present time. The shadow government hardly conceals the mailed fist. Under the Constitution the Minister of War practically controls the cabinet. By resigning he forces the resignation of the entire cabinet (or parliamentary administrative body) since no cabinet is permitted to function without a Minister of War who must be either a general or an admiral. No general or admiral will consent to become Minister without the consent of his conferees. Per contra the Minister of War need not resign with the rest of the cabinet. In short the military clique form a class apart, "responsible" only to the Emperor, that is, to themselves. These glaring contradictions in Japanese "democracy" became the focus of attention in the invasion of Manchuria and China.

(To be continued)