

# League Replies to Weisbord Letter

1. The Communist League, as the American section of the International Left Opposition of the Comintern, aims now as in the past to unite in its ranks all those who stand with us on a common basis of principles and methods, to facilitate the approach and fusion of those who are consistently moving in our direction, and to wage an implacable struggle against all elements of confusion which would blur the sharp distinctions between the three basic currents in the Communist movement and thereby paralyze the striking force of the revolutionary Marxian wing. This fundamental consideration has guided us in our attitude toward all the individuals and groups which have broken in one way or another with the official regime of bureaucratic Centrism. It determined our friendly attitude and attempts at collaboration with Weisbord when he first began to approach the League, as well as our determined struggle against him when he began his attempt to disrupt the organization, to set up a rival against it on a platform in principle contradiction to ours, and to fight the League with unworthy methods and slanders.

2. As long as Weisbord and his group ("The Communist League of Struggle") stood on this ground and employed these methods we could only regard him as an opponent, if not an enemy, of the Left Opposition. The basis for a comradesly discussion of secondary differences and loyal collaboration in specific tasks within a general framework of principle agreement did not exist. Before everything the League considered and considers it necessary to mark off distinctly its principle line and its methods from those of all other groups and tendencies and to reject everything that stands in the way of this clarification. This course does not signify the splitting of hairs or the exaggeration of differences, but rather the bringing out into prominent relief of those questions and differences which are essential and fundamental. The struggle against the claims of Weisbord was a necessary struggle for the ideological clarity and organizational integrity of the League.

3. The new statement of Weisbord and his group represents a partial turn in the direction of the Left Opposition on the most important principle questions, and a certain moderation in the form and tone of his criticism. Although in neither case is the correction made with the necessary frankness and thoroughness. This change of position, however, creates the possibility, which was previously lacking, to give consideration once again to the question of relations with this group and to point out what, in our opinion, stands yet in the way of its inclusion in the League. In yielding on the main questions of principle, which separated it from the Left Opposition, the Weisbord group removes the foundation of its right to a separate existence. Only when it takes this point of departure and takes serious and sincere steps toward inclusion in the League on the basis of its principle line, will its proclamations on the principle questions validate themselves. Up to now this has not been the case. The actions of Weisbord since his return from Europe tend rather to contradict the political implications of his statement and bear the character of futile maneuvers. Only a radical change in this course and a direct approach to the League will make it possible to give more serious consideration to the prin-

With the last issue, the Militant concluded the statement drawn up by the Weisbord group in reply to the letter which had been addressed to it by comrade Trotsky. With the present issue, we begin publication of the reply to this statement presented by the National Committee of the Communist League of America (Opposition).

Principle concessions as a basis of unity The International Left Opposition, including its American section, is not only a system of ideas but a definite organization toward which precise and unambiguous relations are required.

Whatever the result may be in the field of organization—and this depends on the sincere approach of the Weisbord group to the League, which the League will not repulse—the ideological and political victory of the Left Opposition in the two-years dispute with Weisbord is already recorded in his own declarations. And in this there is to be seen not the victory of some persons and the defeat of others, but rather the invincible strength of the ideas of the Bolshevik-Leninists, in America as throughout the world. There is only one platform for the proletariat to free the vanguard of the proletariat from Centrism and the Right wing and restore the Comintern to the path of Lenin, and that is the platform of the International Left Opposition. All intermediary groups, all those who play with it or that idea of the Left Opposition without comprehending and embracing the system of its doctrines, are condemned to futility and bankruptcy. The strength of the Left Opposition is demonstrated not only by the steady inroads it makes in the party and the growth of its influence there, but also in its capacity to draw to itself and absorb all groups and currents breaking away from the Centrist regime and the Right wing in a Leftward direction. From this point of view—as international experience has shown—we can be assured that some, if not all, of the Weisbord group will find their way to a complete fusion with us. And it goes without saying that the National Committee will do all in its power to facilitate and hasten this process, without putting unnecessary obstacles in the way or imposing any unreasonable conditions. What is required for this is only the requisite clarity and agreement on principles and methods and a genuine attitude of good faith toward the League as an organization.

The general direction of Weisbord and the comrades associated with him, over a period now of several years, despite a number of contradictions and a great deal of confusion, has been toward the Left Opposition. But it is just these contradictions and it is just these contradictions, in the highest degree by the one-sided, false, embittered and caricatured factional criticisms of Weisbord, and his impermissible methods, which justify the League in submitting the new turn in principle toward the line of the League to the necessary tests and in examining his actions with a certain caution. Sufficient proofs must be established that the contradiction between his previous course and ours is really liquidated and not simply transferred inside the League. Otherwise a fusion, instead of strengthening and consolidating the forces of the Left Opposition, would only prepare the way for new convulsions.

The nucleus of the present Weisbord group originated in the Right wing of the party. After participating in the party campaign against the "Trotskyists", he found himself in conflict with the party regime after the expulsion of the Lovestone group, and soon afterwards was himself expelled. After compromising himself with the expelled Right wing, without formally joining it, he went through a period of vacillation between the Right and the Left. When he first approached us two years ago he said he had not made up his mind which faction to join, but intended to "join one or the other". At that time he was full of the idea of "the two groups working together", and made a number of bizarre propositions in this spirit. He proposed that he be allowed to write both for the Militant and the Revolutionary Age, as though the sharp lines of principle demarcation between the two organizations had not been established. He did in fact submit articles to both papers, and one of them—a programmatic character—was printed in the Militant as a discussion article to inform our movement of his views.

In this program article, Sept. 1 and 15, 1930) he expressed views in basic contradiction to those of the Left Opposition, especially on the question of Centrism and the bloc with the Right wing, and he never clearly corrected them until his letter in reply to comrade Trotsky's criticism (Class Struggle, August 1932). After a number of meetings and friendly conversations between Weisbord and members of the National Committee, in which our attempts to convince him of his errors were unsuccessful, it was found impossible to accept his application for membership in the League. Our attitude was not determined by his criticisms on secondary questions, but by the differences of a principle character which have been illuminated in comrade Trotsky's letter. It is now all the subsequent developments it is now indisputable that the attitude of the National Committee, supported by the entire membership of the League, was entirely correct.

The position of the National Committee at that time was consistent, we believe, with the position it takes now toward the Weisbord group and all others moving in the direction of the Left Opposition. While pointing out the most important principle differences which excluded a complete organizational unity, the statement of the National Committee (Militant, Sept. 15, 1930) took into account his trend toward us and said: "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. . . . The National Committee decided, in view of Weisbord's closeness to the views of the fields of work conforming to his position". Matters did not work out that way in the ensuing two years because Weisbord did not meet us on this ground. For collaboration he substituted a violent factional struggle and a series of cheap, unworthy and easily repulsed maneuvers.

Beginning first with the attempt to organize a faction in the New York branch of the League, while ostensibly "collaborating" with us as instructor of a study class in economics, Weisbord soon went over to open struggle against the League. In the course of the past year and a half he attempted to set up an

organization ("The Communist League of Struggle") as a rival to the American section of the International Left Opposition and sowed confusion by the claim of also "adhering" to the International Left Opposition. In this disruptive undertaking Weisbord brought himself into the sharpest conflict with us, both in principle questions and in methods, and evoked against himself the indignant resentment of the entire membership of the League. The fact that the "Communist League of Struggle" never succeeded in making a serious impression anywhere did not alter the fact that it was aimed destructively at the League. In the course of that struggle against us we could only see Weisbord as an enemy who fought the League with weapons to a considerable extent borrowed from the Stalinists and the Right wing. His claim to "adhere" to the Left Opposition while fighting against some of its most fundamental conceptions and against its American section worked exclusively in the direction of compromising and discrediting the cause of the Left Opposition.

From the very beginning of the attempt to set up an independent organization against the League on a separate platform it was clear to us that Weisbord and his close associates had occupied an absolutely hopeless position on which he could not remain for long. The failure to make the slightest impression on the membership of the League, the inability to extend the organization beyond the single small group in which nearly half of the membership was lost—all these developments were unfailing signs of the political hopelessness of the venture and of the categorical necessity to make a decisive turn. That the group has now taken a definite turn toward the Left Opposition in the most important principle questions which separated it in the past is to the credit of the group and, if it is carried through consistently, it will determine for us an alternation of our previous attitude of irreconcilable antagonism.

Whether this is really the case or not can be established best, at least in a preliminary way, by an examination of the reply of the Weisbord group to comrade Trotsky's letter in the light of the fundamental objections, in principle and methods, which the League has previously made to collaboration or unity with this group.

**I. The Question of Centrism and the Bloc with the Right Wing**  
On these questions—which separated it from us fundamentally—the Weisbord group has made a retreat from its old position, but it has done so in the worst possible way—without criticizing its former position or acknowledging its falsity. Thus they give no assurances whatsoever against a relapse into the fundamental errors which flowed inevitably from its original position. To say, "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", is not to clarify but to muddle the really deep and fundamental difference that existed on this question. And likewise to "energetically emphasize the fact that we have never proposed a BLOC with the Right wing (Lovestonites), meaning by a bloc a general vague alliance", leaves us in doubt as to how they understood the fundamental conflict also on this question (directly related to the question of bureaucratic centrism) and whether they want to justify their former position and propose that the League should adopt it. In that case there would be no possibility of agreement. Clarification on these points is indispensable.

(Continued in next issue)

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(Continued in next issue)

## MADRID LETTER

# Checking Sanjurjo's Coup

### The Spanish Proletariat Replies to the Monarchist Insurrection

The attempt at a monarchist restoration in Spain, carried out by the overwhelming majority of the commanders of the army and navy has considerable importance and demonstrates to what depths the Republic has sunk as a reactionary state, despite its title of "Republic of all classes of workers".

#### The Government and the Monarchists

Even today the constitution approved by the Cortes is one of the most reactionary among the countries called republican and democratic. Of the democratic pledges made by the present rulers before they seized power, there remains nothing but a memory of deceit. And on top of this reactionary constitution they have built up a series of Exceptional Laws, such as the Law for the Defense of the Republic, and the law on associations, (which outlaws all organizations refusing to play the role of the reformist social-democratic organizations. This law was promulgated for exactly that reason by the socialist labor minister, Caballero), and others. The Spanish republic, breaking off all contact with the masses which caused it to triumph, has evolved toward the sharpest reaction and has fallen into the hands of more or less disguised elements of the old monarchist regime. Sanjurjo, the general who raised the banner of revolt against the republic in Seville, was, until the very day of the uprising, a confidant of the government entrusted with wielding power against the people.

The government had been warned many times of the reactionary maneuvers of Sanjurjo and the monarchists; but it did not know how nor did it want to take measures against them. The government fully bore out the thesis defended by comrade Trotsky and the Communist Left Opposition, on the impossibility of the Spanish bourgeoisie accomplishing a democratic revolution. Not only did it not accomplish the democratic revolution, but it allowed the enemies of the regime, the monarchists, to maneuver against the republic.

We already know that the government, by losing the contact it had had (up to the proclamation of the republic), with the masses generally and with the working class specifically (the anarchists and socialists were among those who helped the present leaders the most in seizing power), broke the "democratic" links between the republic and the popular opinion which had supported the new regime during the first days of its existence.

#### The Rotten Republic

The reactionary forces, which are far more intelligent than the myopic politicians of the present government, knew how to keep under cover during the earliest days of the Republic, just as they know how to rise up in the streets when they considered the government vanquished. The feebleness of the government has been the basic prop and the strongest animator of the reactionary monarchists.

Without the energetic defense of the workers against the monarchy, the government would have offered no resistance to the monarchist reaction. Realizing the significance of the monarchist military movement, and knowing that almost all the army and navy commanders were against the government and in favor of the uprising, the government and parlia-

ment created an impression of boundless cowardice, and quite literally they did not know what to do.

After a good deal of delay and vacillation, the government took action against Sanjurjo. The Sevillian authorities, for example, surrendered their power to the monarchists without offering the least show of resistance. Today this same government sees itself compelled to imprison its own representatives at Seville in the face of the popular accusations which hold them responsible for the power having fallen into the monarchists' hands. Beyond a doubt the monarchists wanted to profit by the general discontent existing among the present rulers; but they did not understand that, though it is true that the popular masses are disgusted with the return to the state of affairs that existed before the republic, it was the working masses who defended the republic by snatching it from the hands of Sanjurjo and the monarchist generals. But that does not mean that the masses were on the side of the Azana government which expedited the monarchists' maneuvers by its weakness and its political incapacity.

#### The Democratic Illusions of the Proletariat

We must draw two conclusions from the recent events. The first is that, despite the discontent of the working masses with the present rulers' administration, democratic illusions still exist among them. It seems a contradiction that the workers' masses understood the reactionary role that the leaders of the republic were playing, that they felt keenly the injury dealt by the Law for the Defense of the Republic, and that they should not yet have lost faith in abstract democracy. The working masses know that of the official Communist leaders, who did not know how to destroy the confidence of the workers in bourgeois democracy. The working masses know that the present rulers have "betrayed" the interests of the republic, and that if they were governing as "real republicans" matters would proceed in an entirely different fashion. This explains how certain entirely disregarded elements in the previous period of the republic, such as those who today wave the banner of radical republicanism, succeeded in winning tremendous influence among the popular circles, especially the workers. Such are the consequences of the policy which consists of giving "Soviet" slogans the very day of the republic's proclamation, at the moment when the republican and democratic enthusiasm of the masses was at its highest pitch.

The other fundamental lesson of the latest events consists in the tremendous progress realized by the reactionary and monarchist forces. It is not an unimportant thing to note that all the army leaders were against the government. This fact had considerable effect in official circles and threw panic into the heart of the government. That is why nobody was executed: the government dreads the threatening reaction more than it does public opinion. This fact produces a serious conflict for the government and a serious danger: for the regime.

#### For a Workers' United Front

The working-class movement is at present in a period of outright depression. No one can doubt that it will rise up again very shortly, and more strongly than ever before, but for the moment, the proletariat factor is not exercising the pressure that circumstances require. This is a fact of the utmost importance in the present circumstances. The united front of the proletariat is today more necessary than ever. At Seville we saw an exemplary case of the united front at the time of Sanjurjo's coup d'Etat, and it was this which produced the general's defeat. Only the united front can offer the desired solution—to require the execution of the reactionary generals and to halt the advance of the reaction. And it is not simply a question of settling the question of the penalties which the vanquished reactionaries must undergo, but of adopting really revolutionary means to put an end to the monarchist maneuvers. The government is powerless to do this; the socialists bury their heads, without being able to determine for themselves the orientation which the government should follow. The Spanish proletariat must demand from the socialists (today the slogan of "all power to the socialists" would be justified), that they act with energy, that they insist upon the punishment of those responsible for complexity and tolerance toward the reaction, either directly or indirectly.

Without the united front of the Spanish proletariat, the perspective of this reactionary Spanish republic can only be precipitation into a regime of dictatorship which, if it does not reinstate the monarchy, will become a "republican" regime of the type of Portugal or Cuba. But the united front of the proletariat is easily realizable, as we have seen in the case of Seville, provided the myopia of some and the ill-will of others (the anarchist, socialists and official Communists), do not oppose it. In this sense, the monarchist attempt has been pregnant with lessons, and will be still more so in the processes and developments of these events.

Madrid, September 1932.

—H. LACROIX.

# JAPAN

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

By Jack Weber

(Continued from last issue)

It was fortunate for Japan that the Civil War absorbed American energies and that the conquest of India took all of England's attention after Perry's demonstration. Japan was faced with the immediate task of providing for the national defense against the encroachment of the imperialists. Without a breathing-spell she could not have withstood further onslaughts. In her weakness the government was forced to sign a humiliating treaty (Towson-Harris—1857 with the Tokugawas) with America which granted extra-territoriality to American citizens and which restricted duties on imports to a maximum of 5% ad valorem, creating an open market as the high tariff American government knew. This same treaty had to be granted to the other powers after the demolition of the batteries of Shimoneseki Straits in 1864 by the combined fleets of England, Holland, France and America as punishment for the damaging of some vessels trying to pass through the forbidden straits. The shogun wrote at this time: "These foreigners are no longer to be despised. The art of navigation, steam vessels, and naval and military preparations have found full development in their hands. A war with them might result in temporary victories on our part but when our country would be beset by their combined armaments the whole land would be involved in consequences which we can divine from China's experience." The Japs were fearful, observing that the Philippine Islands has been in Spain's hands for 300 years; Java had come under Dutch influence in 1705 and under her complete control in 1830; the dismemberment of China had begun in 1577 with the Portuguese at Macao; only recently in 1840 the British had taken Hongkong as a result of the Opium Wars; the French were already in Indo-China.

Modern military defense was unthink-

able without advanced industrial development modelled on Western lines. The feudal system with its low estimation of the merchant class, with its sumptuary laws defining narrowly the food and clothing of the exploited, with its lack of accumulations from an economy at the bare subsistence level, with its complete lack of technological training for the use machinery—all this left the burden completely on the shoulders of the new bureaucracy. To begin a strenuous period of industrial development, only the government could provide the necessary funds. The government had to take the initiative in deciding what industries to begin, how to encourage scientific and technical training.

**Foreign Aid**  
Whatever similarities exist between the haphazard Japanese program and the planned Soviet program of industrialization (despite its serious errors) can be observed in the immediate inviting of foreign experts to construct and start new plants and to train workers. During the years 1854 to 1859 the lord of Mito had already invited 22 Dutch experts to establish shipyards and to teach the latest arts of shipbuilding. The new government took this enterprise over. It invited British engineers to build the first railroads; British workmen were invited to assist in the erection and operation of the early iron works; British teachers taught glass-making in Tokio; American and British engineers introduced modern mining methods and the use of explosives; French and Italian experts westernized the silk industry; Swiss taught the hemp-braid industry; Germans introduced brewing, the smelting of zinc, the making of steel and the chemical industries; French and Germans started dye making. By 1872 there were 300 foreign engineers in government departments acting as experts. The Americans contributed little due to

their own "infancy" so that today Japanese industry is more European than American. Just as in Soviet Russia, the dependence on foreign experts was not completely successful. The Japs were often imposed upon, some experts were bluffers and other out-and-out frauds (as with the beginning of Stalingrad).

The government thus took the place of the entrepreneur in establishing the first arsenals, the first silk mill, the first glass factory, the first chemical works. It has operated porcelain works, silk and cotton spinning mills, linen factories, cement and brick plants, plants for soap making, type-founding, paint making, food factories, iron and steel plants. There are few industries that do not owe their existence to government initiative.

**The Feudo-Capitalist Alliance**  
And yet by 1880 most of the government-owned plants were in private hands! For the government took the unique step of handing these finished plants over to individuals—without the slightest compensation in the vast majority of cases! The meaning and results of this transaction must be clearly stated. That there was nothing queer to Japs in this handing over of wealth to the few, is due to the left-over feudal psychology and to the fact of control by feudal lords. The "lord" could hand over a "fief" to anyone he chose, usually for personal loyalty, and almost always to previous samurai subordinates. That is exactly what occurred. Every member of the Genro, every premier selected by the Genro, has had his particular protégé whom he has enriched. Iwasaki ("Working Forces in Japanese Politics") says: "The way to get rich was to become the friend of some high officers of the government." Thus Marquis Inouye befriended the Matsuis, one of the "big five" capitalist families of modern Japan. Okuma helped the Iwasakis, the present steamship kings. Baron Goto, while Governor of Formosa, made the Suzukis the sugar kings, the same Suzukis who profited most during the world war by selling munitions. The alliance between the feudal lords and the new capitalists has been very firmly cemented indeed. This is of utmost significance for the future agrarian democratic revolution. It need hardly be said that in the war the militarists experienced not the slightest resistance on the part of the capitalists to the complete mobilization of industry for mil-

itary purposes.  
The close and direct relationship between capitalist industry and the government is one of the peculiarities of Japanese economy. Up to 1899 the "unequal" treaties of the Powers with Japan remained in force, preventing the raising of tariff barriers to protect infant industries. But every other device to encourage industry and to enrich the capitalists was resorted to by the government. Thus, tax exemptions have been frequently granted, duty remissions are made practically on request, subsidies were and still are common and since 1899 the tariff has been an important weapon of defense and offense. Apart from the world war period the shipping industry could not have existed for a single year without large subsidies amounting to enough to cover a substantial slice of the operating expenses plus a large profit to the shipping interests. The main line railways were nationalized at the time of the Russo-Jap war, but there are a number of private war lines whose profit is guaranteed by the government. Loans are readily granted to new enterprises with very little hope of their return. Contributions from the national treasury to private industry in 1928.9 amounted to 21.9% of the total budget. Under the conditions of industrial growth the government itself has never been able to discontinue entirely its own operation of industrial enterprises, as is evident from the fact that in 1928 there were as many as 371 government factories employing 136,000 workers.

**Industrial Handicaps and Japanese Imperialism**  
World economy stimulated the growth of industrial Japan,—but that same world economy now holds Japan as in a vise, tending to strangle her capitalism. And it can be said with utmost confidence that Japan will find no real solution to her life-and-death problems under the world hegemony of capitalism. Imperialism attempts to overcome these handicaps with a sword but is doomed to failure. Japan's part in the international division of labor will be decided by her workers and peasants, not by domestic and foreign capitalists.

There are three great handicaps that condition Japanese industrial growth. These are: (1) money stringency; (2) poverty in raw materials; (3) need for stable markets.

(1) Money stringency and the financial of industry.

The growth of industry demands larger and larger amounts of fluid capital. Quite poor in metallic and mineral resources, Japan has been forced continuously to import both gold and silver for the coining of money, as domestic production scarcely meets industrial and art purposes. It was possible for Japan to establish a more or less stable financial and banking system only with the aid of the 200,000,000 taels indemnity squeezed out of China after the Sino-Jap war. Throughout the modern era Japan has been an importer of raw materials and machinery resulting in an unfavorable net balance of trade (except during the world war). If not through spheres of influence, then economically the capitalist powers exploit Japan as a market. To pay for the imported materials Japan has had to make larger loans abroad. Although the total amount of the public debt is smaller than that of any of the powers, the absolute amount and percentage of foreign debt is greater, whereas the domestic debt is smaller than that of any other country.

The money stringency of Japanese capitalism is reflected in the high interest rates. Banks pay around 10% on deposits. The short-term discount rate is over 10% as compared with the 4.5% of Western countries. These rates impose a severe handicap on Japanese industry. Owing to their youth and to the failure to build up adequate surpluses, industrial concerns are under the necessity of borrowing a large part of their working capital. As the high rates are an important element in the cost of production, they are a handicap to Japanese enterprise in meeting foreign competition. Struggle as she may to overcome this difficulty, Japan falls more and more under the influence of American finance capital. The unparalleled dependence of Japanese production on foreign markets makes Japan extremely sensitive to world economic conditions. Since 1920 she has been in the throes of a profound crisis causing her foreign exchange to fall catastrophically. The inflation caused by the tripling of her bank-note emission during and following the war has been aggravated by the heavy demands made on Japanese economy through the imperialist seizure of Manchuria.

(To be continued)

**VOTE COMMUNIST!**