

PARTY PRE-CONVENTION DISCUSSION SECTION

On October 16 the minority of the Political Committee of the Party consisting of Comrades Aronberg, Bittelman and Foster, submitted a statement to the Political Committee containing the following charges against Cannon, Abern and Shachtman:

1) It has become clear, in recent weeks, that Comrade Cannon, supported by Comrades Abern and Shachtman, is carrying on activities, leading to the crystallization of a Trotskyist faction in our Party. Comrade Cannon is making a political platform of such propositions as: keeping an open mind on the question of Trotskyism, studying the question, spreading doubt as to the correctness of the C. I. attitude on the question, and urging the need of re-examining it, etc.

2) Trotskyism has been correctly condemned by the C. I. as a social-democratic and counter-revolutionary tendency. Trotskyism employs left phrases to cover up Right deeds. Comrade Cannon's variety of Trotskyism in the U. S. constitutes a tendency to develop a Right wing orientation for the American Section of the C. I., under cover of reopening for discussion the C. I. attitude on the question of Trotskyism.

3) The main danger in our Party, as in the C. I., comes in the present period from the Right. The minority is committed to an uncompromising fight against the Right Danger in our Party no matter from where it comes or under what cover it makes its appearance.

4) The minority therefore completely dissociates itself from Comrade Cannon and those who hold similar views. The minority decides to wage a merciless fight against this Trotskyist maneuver of Comrade Cannon and to wage this fight as an organic part of its general struggle against the Right Danger and the Right wing of our Party (the Lovestone group).

Confronted with this charge, Cannon assumed the following attitude—while evading to answer whether he was for Trotskyism or against it; he definitely branded the charges of the minority as false. When further pressed for a direct answer as to his attitude on Trotskyism and as to his intentions of reopening the discussion in the Party on this question, it became clear from his answers that Cannon and those sharing his views are actually proceeding to the building up of a Trotskyist faction in the Party. It was also clear that Cannon was playing for time and therefore was unwilling at that time to openly state his decision in favor of Trotskyism.

But the charges submitted by the minority taken together with Cannon's attitude toward them was such that the Political Committee became convinced that Cannon and those sharing his views on this question could not be further entrusted with the holding of their positions in the Party. The Polcom thereupon adopted the motion of the minority to remove Cannon, Abern and Shachtman from their positions and to initiate a thorough investigation into the matter. This investigation was carried on by the Polcom and was participated in by all those comrades in the minority who from personal contact with Cannon could assist the Party in exposing and defeating Cannon's Trotskyist move. In this manner Cannon was finally compelled to come out from his hiding place and to state his decision on Trotskyism which he did by submitting a statement to the Political Committee in the name of himself, Abern, Shachtman. Following this open declaration for Trotskyism, the Political Committee unanimously expelled Cannon, Abern, Shachtman from the Party.

The Role of the Minority in Exposing and Defeating the Cannon Trotskyist Move.

It has been established by the investigation that comrades of the minority who were in personal contact with Cannon, Shachtman and Abern after the return of Cannon from the Sixth World Congress, have been successful in exposing Cannon's moves and thus enable the Party to defeat them. The records of the investigation definitely prove that it was due to the efforts of Comrades Hathaway, Gomez, Castrell, Wagenknecht, Aronberg, Gorham and a few others that the Political Committee was able to take effective action against Cannon and his followers and thus enable the Party to liquidate the developing Trotsky Opposition.

The above named comrades of the minority, when they received their first inkling of Cannon's developing Trotskyist Opposition on October 3, proceeded to take necessary steps to establish the facts and bring them to the Polcom. The suspicion that something was wrong with Cannon on the question of Trotskyism was forced on them by statements of Cannon, Abern and Shachtman to the effect that the question of Trotskyism is not really settled, yet, that we have not studied the question enough to be able to render complete and final judgment on this issue. The above named comrades of the minority became further strengthened in their suspicions when Cannon in the next several days began to advocate what he called "an open mind" on Trotskyism. These developments taken in connection with the attitude of Cannon, Abern, Shachtman to abstain from voting in the membership meeting in New York on the question of endorsing the general line

of the Comintern convinced the above named comrades of the minority that Cannon was developing a line which leads to the crystallization of a Trotskyist faction in the Party. The comrades, however, knew that in the absence of conclusive evidence Cannon might deny the charges and retract further into political hiding as he did threaten to do before the charges were submitted to the Polcom. Therefore the above comrades of the minority proceeded from that point on to secure all available proof to convince the Polcom of the correctness of the charges which they had made.

It is thus seen that within less than two weeks after the comrades of the minority in New York first got their suspicion about the maturing Trotskyist Opposition of Cannon, the comrades were successful in establishing the facts before the Political Committee with the subsequent expulsion of Cannon, Abern and Shachtman from the Party.

The majority of the Central Committee while pretending to disprove charges of Trotskyism against the minority at the same time launches a bitter attack against the minority which in substance accuses them of Trotskyism, citing especially Comrades Gomez, Castrell, Aronberg, Douglas, Hathaway, Gorham, Frankfeld and Wagenknecht for withholding information from the Polcom about the Trotskyist attitude of Cannon, for expelling Cannon from the minority group instead of bringing the matter immediately to the Political Committee, for making a joint declaration in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as well as in the Communist Parties as a whole, the main danger comes from the Right, while at the same time we continue to combat the opportunist deviations that mask themselves in left phrases. This is the point of view of the minority on the question. It is not the point of view of the Central Committee which makes Trotskyism the main danger in the Party and obscures and weakens the struggle against the Right deviations and the Right dangers.

The present struggle of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union against the Right Danger on the one hand, and against Trotskyism on the other hand, the same Comintern line is being put into effect.

These accusations are absolutely false; the facts are as follows: (1) No information "about the outright Trotskyist attitude of Cannon" was withheld from the Political Committee. The investigation proves this. The comrades of the minority did not present to the Polcom their mere individual suspicions but, on the contrary secured proof confirming these suspicions and then brought the matter to the Political Committee.

(2) When these comrades expelled Cannon from the minority, this was precisely one of the means by which they forced Cannon to come out into the open and thus enabled the Party to see the Cannon move and to attack it.

(3) When Comrades Aronberg and Castrell signed together with Cannon the declaration of the minority to the Polcom on their attitude to the Comintern decision on the American question, they at that time had absolutely no inkling about the Trotskyist designs of Cannon. The same considerations explain the selection of Cannon as one of the steering committee of the minority at the membership meeting of October 3.

(4) The delegates of the minority to the Sixth World Congress had learned of Cannon's absence in the Congress when the Trotskyist question was acted on until after arriving in the United States and during the investigation of this matter. The delegates of the minority to the Congress did know in Moscow that Cannon was not present in the Congress hall when the general political thesis was voted on. The minority delegates demanded of Cannon an explanation of this action on the next day after the vote on the thesis occurred. Cannon's explanation was that he did not want to vote for the declaration of the minority delegation to the Congress on the thesis. Cannon's Trotskyism was not known by the minority delegates in Moscow.

It is therefore obvious that the accusations made by the majority in its statement against the minority are unfounded. Furthermore, as we will prove later in the document, the meaning of these accusations and attacks is to utilize the Cannon Trotskyist Opposition in order to initiate a new onslaught against the minority through the Comintern.

For the Comintern Line Against the Right Danger and Against Trotskyism.

In the present struggle against both the Right danger and against Trotskyism the minority proposes that the Party shall follow the line laid down by the Comintern International. The line adopted by the majority of the Central Committee of our Party and embodied in its statement is contrary to the Comintern on this question.

What is the Comintern line for the struggle against the Right danger and against Trotskyism? We will quote from Comrade Bukharin's report to the Sixth World Congress:

"Some time ago the greatest danger in the Communist International came from the 'ultra-lefts,' who endeavored to set up an international organization. After the defeats of the Opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union these were frustrated, but the very process of disintegration of the Opposition, the culminating point of which was the collapse of the 'Lenin Bund,' leads us inevitably of certain conclusions."

"At present the principal danger comes from the Right tendency if

For a Correct Bolshevik Line in the American Party Against the Right Danger, and Against the Cannon-Trotsky Opposition

Statement by the Minority of the Central Executive Committee of the Workers (Communist) Party of America

we take the Communist International as a whole.

"The Right danger is assuming considerable proportions just now and it is but natural that after smashing the Trotskyist Opposition we must adopt a very definite policy against these Right tendencies and small Right oppositional groupings."

This point of view was incorporated in the Congress decision on the question which is that after the defeat and disintegration of the Trotskyist Opposition in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union as well as in the Communist Parties as a whole, the main danger comes from the Right, while at the same time we continue to combat the opportunist deviations that mask themselves in left phrases. This is the point of view of the minority on the question. It is not the point of view of the Central Committee which makes Trotskyism the main danger in the Party and obscures and weakens the struggle against the Right deviations and the Right dangers.

The key to the position of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union against the Right Danger on the one hand, and against Trotskyism on the other hand, the same Comintern line is being put into effect.

"Trotskyism, in its last stage of development, is the summing up, is the unifying force of all these opportunistic Right dangers."

By this statement the Polcom says that the Trotskyist deviation is proving to be too slow and even unwilling to reorientate the Party's general line to these changing objective conditions. This tendency gives rise to Right wing deviations and is at the bottom of the Right danger in the American Party.

The question of the Right and Left deviations in our Party cannot possibly be considered as a trifling matter. What are the characteristics of the openly opportunist Right deviations in our Party? They consist in the fact that they underestimate the strength of our enemies, the capitalists, refuse to see the danger of the reestablishment of capitalism, fail to understand the dynamics of the class struggle under the conditions of proletarian dictatorship, and therefore, easily agree to make concessions to capitalism by demanding the slowing down of our rate of industrial development and facilities for the capitalist element in town and country, thrust the question of collective and Soviet undertakings into the background, demand a restriction of the foreign trade monopoly, etc. The victory of the Right deviation in our Party would doubtless combine the forces of capitalism, shatter the revolutionary position of the proletariat and enhance the chance of reestablishment of capitalism in our country.

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PARTY DISCUSSION OPENED

The Central Executive Committee decided to open the Party preconvention discussion immediately.

The discussion is to be conducted on such a basis as will guarantee the freest possible opportunities to comrades in opposition to the Central Executive Committee to present their viewpoint, solely limited by the statutes of the Communist International and within the principles of Communism.

All Party units, sub-divisions and the entire Party press will be guided by this policy.

The Central Executive Committee urges all Party members to participate actively in this discussion. The C. E. C. especially welcomes contributions by comrades in the workshops, mines and mills.

The discussion should be conducted in a spirit of constructive self-criticism.

All discussion articles should be sent to the National Office of the Party.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
WORKERS (COMMUNIST) PARTY OF AMERICA

struggles, by moderating, weakening and striking power of working-class and of our Party.

The same tendency to capitulate takes also the form of outright pessimism, of a tendency to give up, to become passive, to withdraw from the party. This tendency, which cloaks itself in left phrases and at present in our Party adopts Trotskyism as its platform, is harmful and deadly to the growth of our Party. While pretending to strive for an improvement in the Party's policies and professing to fight for a stronger Communist Party, in reality it spreads pessimism, lack of faith in our movement, demoralization, etc.

The Party must therefore wage a merciless struggle on two fronts—against the open Right danger and against the Trotsky Opposition led by Cannon. It is only in the struggle against the Right and Left deviations that the Communist Party of America will be able to develop a correct line and to crystallize a Bolshevik proletarian leadership.

Only Correct Bolshevik Line Can Defeat the Right and Trotskyist Deviations.

The struggle against the Right deviations on the one hand and Trotskyist deviations on the other hand is a struggle on two fronts against the influence of opportunism in our Party. This struggle can be waged successfully only through the adoption by our Party of a correct Bolshevik line.

Trotkyism is incompatible with Leninism. Trotkyism is incompatible with the membership in our Party. In the struggle against Trotkyism the Party must differentiate between leading and responsible Party members and non-proletarian elements who consciously adopt the anti-Comintern position of Trotkyism and those proletarian elements who because of lack of clarity and weak Communist ideology adopt a hesitant attitude on the question. Toward leading and responsible Party members and non-proletarian elements the Party must apply all necessary organizational measures, including expulsion from the Party, which are necessary to protect the Party from the demoralizing effects of Trotkyism.

To fight successfully against Trotkyism the Party must be strengthened in its Bolshevik ideology. It must reject all theories which are cultivating a fatalistic attitude towards the power of American imperialism. It must condemn and defeat all such ideologies as underestimate the revolutionizing influences of the outer and inner contradictions of American imperialism. It must clearly see that while American imperialism is still developing upward there are maturing internal and external contradictions which are sharpening the class relations and class struggle in the United States. It must orientate itself primarily on the unskilled, unorganized and most exploited section of the American working class.

These tendencies, which constitute the line of the Central Committee of our Party, have the effect of paralyzing the fighting ability of the Party, retarding its activities for developing mass struggles and mass organizations and hence, are weakening the working class and strengthening its enemies. These are Right tendencies, open opportunist tendencies, and constitute the Right danger in the American Party which must be fought against and defeated in order that the Party may pursue a correct Bolshevik line.

2. Leftist Deviations.

There are on the other hand certain elements in the Party and on its fringe which have become so pessimistic as to the possibility of developing the revolutionary class struggle in the U. S. that they practically capitulate before the existing difficulties under cover of Left phrases. This tendency gives rise to Leftist deviations.

Deviations to the Left in the American Party grow out of the same objective situation as right deviations. The slow growth of the Party, the difficulties of an internal and external character which our Party is meeting in the process of becoming a mass Communist Party, has given rise in certain sections of the Party to a fatalistic attitude toward American capitalism, toward the possibilities of struggle against it and the opportunities of building up a mass Communist Party in the United States.

This finds its expression in an overestimation of the strength and reserve power of American imperialism, an underestimation of the depth of dissatisfaction and of the extent of the process of radicalization which is slowly but definitely taking place among the large masses of the Communist Party which are not sufficiently firm in their Communist ideology, to pessimism in the possibility of building up a Communist Party in the United States. These numerically weak elements are tending to lose faith in the Communist Party and in the possibilities of its growth and they also tend to lose faith in the Comintern generally. These elements have in the past and today rallied to Trotkyism. Losing faith in the possibilities of our Party because of the inner and outer difficulties that it confronts in the process of growth, these elements are embracing Trotkyism and joining more or less actively in the struggle of Trotkyism against the Comintern and against our Party.

The opportunities for the development of working class struggles in the U. S. and for the growth of our Party are increasingly becoming more favorable due to the changing objective conditions, but in order that our Party may be able to make full use of these opportunities it has to overcome numerous obstacles and difficulties of an internal and external character. These difficulties arise from the lack of homogeneity in the American working class and hence lack of homogeneity in our own Party, the waning but still powerful influence of the corrupt aristocracy and bureaucracy of labor upon the working masses and its reflection within our Party as expressed in the tendency to orientate the Party policy on the aristocracy of labor, the lack of Bolshevik maturity of the Party and the painful process of internal struggle for the crystallization of a Bolshevik proletarian leadership. The Party membership must not be swayed into pessimism, adventurism, and opposition to the Comintern, because of the difficulties in the process of crystallizing a correct line and building up a Bolshevik proletarian leadership. The Party membership must see that the road of Trotkyism leads not only outside of the revolutionary class struggle, outside of the Communist International, but directly into the camp of the enemies of the working class into the camp of open counter-revolution.

It is not through the acceptance of Trotkyism but on the contrary through a decisive rejection of Trotkyism as well as the rejection of the fatalistic attitude toward American imperialism that our Party will defeat both the Right danger and the Trotkyist danger.

The Fight Against These Deviations

We urge the Party to wage a consistent struggle against the right danger in our Party as well as in the Comintern generally. The Sixth World Congress has pointed out the existence of serious Right deviations and Right wing opposition groups in several of the parties of the Communist International. The recent anti-party activities in Germany, led by Brandler and Thalheimer, and the elements led by Evert, which tolerate the Right deviations, indicate the correctness of the line laid down by the Sixth World Congress that it is now necessary to concentrate the main fire against the Right danger. The experiences of our own Party shows that the right line and orientation of our Central Committee is chiefly responsible for the slow growth of our Party and for its inability to make full use of the favorable factors in the present situation to develop a revolutionary consciousness and struggle among the toiling masses.

Those difficulties which our Party can and must overcome in order to take full advantage of the developing favorable opportunities to strengthen and lead the exploited masses in the struggle against capitalism as before these difficulties. The open right wing tendency proceeds to capitulate by refusing to reorientate the Party's policy to a perspective of sharpening class relations and class struggle.

We urge the Party to reject Trotkyism and defeat and liquidate the Trotkyist Opposition of Cannon. We urge the Party membership to adopt a correct Bolshevik orientation and line for the American class struggle.

We urge the Party members to follow and fight for the line of the Communist International.