

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

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CONTENTS

THE CRISIS IN THE GERMAN LEFT OPPOSITION

(A Letter to all Sections of the International Left)

By L. Trotsky

NOTE

For purely technical reasons, this issue of the Bulletin, which had already been prepared as an internal bulletin of the Communist League of America (Opposition), is being issued as No. 6 of the International Bulletin of the Communist Left Opposition, to correspond with the folio number on the French and German edition. The next issue of the Bulletin, which corresponds chronologically to No. 5 of the German-French edition, will appear in a few days as No. 4-5. There will be no special issue in English of No. 4 of the Bulletin, since the original edition contained only the "Spanish Revolution" by Leon Trotsky. Prior to its publication in the Bulletin, it had already been issued as a pamphlet by the Communist League of America (Opposition), from which it can still be obtained. In connection with the contents of the present number, we refer our readers to No. 4-5 (to appear immediately) which contains, among other material, the following items on the German situation: Note of the editors; theses on trade union work submitted to the national conference of the German Left Opposition by the Saxon organization; letter on the German situation by comrade L. Trotsky; Urbahns and the International Left Opposition. Finally, No. 7 of the Bulletin which will also appear in very short order, contains two additional documents on the German situation.

--The Editors.

(A Letter to all Sections of the International Left.)

The development of the International Left Opposition is proceeding amidst sharp crises that cast the faint-hearted and the short-sighted into pessimism. In reality these crises are completely unavoidable. It suffices only to read the correspondence of Marx and Engels attentively, or to preoccupy oneself seriously with the history of the development of the Bolshevik Party to realize how complicated, how difficult, how full of contradictions the process of raising revolutionary cadres is.

If the first chapter of the Russian Revolution (1917-1923) gave a mighty impulse to the revolutionary tendencies of the world proletariat, then the second chapter, after the year 1923, carried a terrible confusion into the heads of the revolutionary workers. When we review this period in its entirety, we are forced to say: Only a frightful earthquake can bring such devastation in the field of material culture as the administrative conduct of the epigones has brought about in the field of the principles, ideas and methods of Marxism.

It is the task of the Left Opposition to re-establish the thread of historic continuity in Marxist theory and policies. However, the different groups of the Left Opposition in the various countries arose under the influence of the most variegated national, provincial and purely personal factors, and have often, cloaked in the banner of Leninism, brought up their cadres in a completely different and sometimes even in a contrary spirit.

The Austrian Opposition

We must not shut our eyes to the facts. We must openly say: Many opposition groups and groupings represent a caricature of the official party. They possess all its vices, often in an exaggerated form, but not its virtues, which are conditioned by the numerical strength of the workers within them alone, if by nothing else.

The most complete negative sample of a "Left Opposition" is undoubtedly the Austrian. In my pamphlet, "The Austrian Crisis", I attempted to outline an explanation of the strength and the power of resistance of the Austrian social democracy. To come back to this question here is impossible. The fact is that the Austrian Communist Party, which has done everything possible to help the social democracy, is dragging out a woeful existence in the back yard of the labor movement. All the maladies of the C.I. find their sharpest expression in the C.P.A. The Opposition splinters of the C.P.A. -- without international ground under their feet, without an international method in their heads, without contact with the masses, with a narrow Austrian horizon before their eyes -- very rapidly degenerate into unprincipled cliques. These groups enter and leave the International Opposition like a cafe house.

In this respect, the fate of the "Mahara" group is very instructive. Every Oppositionist, not only in Austria but in every country and especially in Germany, must reflect upon the scandalous history of this group. During the last two years, in the course of which I have had an opportunity to observe this group through its press and through correspondence with its representatives, the group has passed through the following evolution: (1) At first, it swore pathetically in the name of the Russian Opposition; (2) Then, it declared unexpectedly that it would not join any international faction; (3) Then, it made the attempt to unite all the groups, including the Rights; (4) Following this, it dissolved its bloc with the Brandhorites and swore anew, loyalty to the International Left; (5) Later on, it adopted -- to bring about unification, so to speak, but in reality for self preservation -- a platform in the spirit of Comrade Landau; (6) Next, it rejected the platform of Comrade Landau and adopted the capitulationist platform of Comrade Graof; (7) Finally, it split off from Graof and declared itself once more to stand on the platform of the International Left. Seven vacillations in their ideas in the course of two years, some of those vacillations taking place in the period of this group's small number

of honest but confused workers. However, we must take the group as a whole, with its leadership and its "tradition". Can we have the slightest confidence in this group? Can we allow such groups within the confines of the International Left?

While it changes its position on the basic questions of Marxism, the Mahnraf group at the same time displays unheard of energy to save its leadership, stopping not even at the most poisonous tricks.

No matter how deplorable it is to waste our own and others' time with trifles, it is nevertheless necessary to use the sorry experiences of the Mahnraf group in the same manner as we use vaccination against sickness. I am taking an example that appears to me to be decisive.

One of the members of the Mahnraf group, a certain K, went over to the Frey group (which is somewhat larger in numbers and has passed through a lesser number of vacillations, but which stands at a far enough distance away from us). The going over of K from one group to the other was sufficient for the Mahnraf group to proclaim K a provocateur and to accuse the Frey group of covering up a provocateur. Proofs? None! The Russian revolutionary organizations, which for decades led an underground existence, had sufficient experiences in the field of struggle against provocation, suspicions, accusations, spying, etc., and the question entered not rarely into the struggle among the different factions (Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, Social Revolutionists, Anarchists, etc.). But I can hardly remember an instance of such criminal toying with heavy accusations as is the case with the Mahnraf group. From the point of view of the revolutionary self-preservation of the organization, it is entirely irrelevant to us whether the Mahnraf group itself believed in these accusations or not, in so far as K, as well as the Frey group, is concerned (the last accusation at any rate they could not believe at all). In both cases, we witness the complete absence of revolutionary morale and a feeling of political responsibility. These symptoms alone suffice for us to say: we have before us a combination of light-headedness and cynicism, i.e., features that are very characteristic of half-Communist and one-fourth Communist Bohemian circles, but which are entirely in contradiction to the psychology of a proletarian revolutionary. If we had really revolutionary groups in Vienna, carrying on a serious ideological struggle against one another, they would have to expel mutually and unanimously, despite their differences, all such elements from their ranks as poison the well of the revolution. That would contribute much more to the revolutionary upbringing of the younger comrades than the unprincipled polemical flurries of journalists, who give themselves the appearance of "irreconcilables".

A revolutionary organization selects and educates people not for intrigues among cliques but for great struggles. That imposes very heavy demands upon the cadres and even greater ones upon the "leaders" or the candidates for the role of leadership. Moments of crisis, no matter how painful they may be, have this political significance in every organization -- they disclose the real, political physiognomy of the people: what sort of a spirit animates them, in whose name they struggle, whether they have the power of endurance, etc.

Naturally, the political evaluation of the people, especially of younger people, is not of a decisive character in most cases. The people can learn on the basis of their experiences, repress some features and develop others. However, it is precisely in order to achieve just such a collective education that the International Left in general and the various sections in particular must diligently pursue the development of every single one of its members, and especially that of the responsible workers. With extreme attentiveness -- in times of crisis. They must not leave unpunished the toying with principles, journalistic light-mindedness, moral looseness and imitated "irreconcilability" -- in the name of personal caprices. Only in this manner can the organization be secured against catastrophic surprises in the future. The spirit of circle-chumminess (you for me, and me for you) is the most abominable of organizational sicknesses. With the aid of chumminess, one can gather a clique around oneself but not a faction of co-thinkers.

In this sense the International Secretariat expressed itself when it considered both of the Austrian groups unfit to belong to the International Left. It is generally known, the Troy group left the International Opposition of its own accord, after it had arrived at the conclusion that its road was not the same as our own. The Mahnuf group is branded by all its actions as an alien body in our midst. I believe, that all the sections will have to reinforce this proposal of the Secretariat with full unanimity and thereby transform it into a final decision.

The Austrian Experiences on German Soil.

The German conditions are sharply distinguished from those in Austria, if only by the existence of a strong Communist Party. However, when we evaluate the history of Germany since 1914, we must say that the present Communist Party is the weakest of all Communist Parties that could have been formed under the exceptional conditions of German development. The objective conditions worked for Communism, the Party leadership against Communism. The result was -- a profound shake-up of the Party, disappointment and distrust of the Party leadership, the growth of scepticism, etc. All this creates in the working class a mass of dispersed, unsatisfied and oppositional elements, some of whom are completely fatigued, spent (only the revolution can bring them to the surface again), while others have retained their revolutionary freshness, but cannot find a correct line and a trustworthy leadership. We must add: Not only the history of the Party as a whole, but that of the Left faction as well, is full of contradictions, zig-zags, mistakes and disappointments. Therefore -- a considerable number of sects, with their customary prescriptions "against" participation in the trade unions, "against" parliamentarism, etc. This means that the Left Opposition must be created on a soil that is overcrowded with the remnants and splinters of former breakdowns. Under these conditions, the role of the leadership takes on an exceptional significance.

What critically thinking Left workers, not only outside the Party, but inside it as well, demand at present of the leadership, above all, is not political infallibility -- this is impossible -- but revolutionary devotion, personal firmness, revolutionary objectivity and honesty. This criterion, which was formerly self-understood in the revolutionary party, has today gained exceptional significance, in view of the bureaucratic decay that has set in during the last few years: Leaders are appointed from above, apparatus men are hired as the businessman hires clerks, the Party functionaries change their opinions on command, they persecute and lie when they are told to do so, etc.

We do not touch upon the third group here that arose suddenly out of the splinter of the other groups. Comrade Graef, the leader of this group, has, in conformity with the customs of Austro-Oppositionism, revised his ideological baggage radically within a brief time and elaborated a platform in which everything is comprehensible, except for one thing: Why and to what purpose does Graef include himself in the Left Opposition? Graef's platform is the platform of the com-follower of the Stalinist bureaucracy, i.e., of the leftist philistines who have attached themselves to the victorious revolution. Barfussé could subscribe to this platform, as well as all the other "Friends of the Soviet Union", who are of as much use as milk that comes from a billy-goat; who are, however, always prepared to go to Soviet Anniversaries and, on the side, to accuse Rakovsky of "Mautskyanism". Apparently, in order not to deviate from the style-line of Austrian caricature, Graef has proposed with the most serious face that his platform be made the basis of the platform of the International Left. In the near future we will devote a few lines to this species of Austro-Communism, too. One thing, nevertheless, is clear, that trailers are not capable of forming any sort of faction. Graef's partisans will capitulate to Stalin or fall into oblivion. After his vacillations, Graef himself will return to his original position. Will he have learned anything from his experiences? Only the future can tell. Meanwhile, it is too bad: Graef distinguished himself from the Austro-Communist school, in so far as he learned more seriously than the others and was not satisfied with writing articles about everything and nothing. But, what can be done? "Fate is my friend, yet truth is dearer to me."

The processes of disintegration may -- it is not at all impossible -- seize single intermediary layers of the Opposition, in so far as the Opposition, especially in its first stages, attracted not only revolutionists, but also all sorts of careerists who joined it. That in turn leads to a sentiment of sceptical indifference among Oppositionist workers in the question of leadership: "All are careerists more or less, but one, for instance, can at least write articles, whereas the others cannot even do that." This explains first of all why many critically inclined workers can reconcile themselves to the Party regime -- they have never seen another! Secondly, why the majority of the Oppositionist workers remain outside of the organization; thirdly, why inside the Opposition the less pretentious workers reconcile themselves with intriguers, since they look upon them as "specialists", as an unavoidable evil, i.e., as the Russian worker looks upon the bourgeois engineers. And this is the result of great defeats on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the disintegrating bureaucratic regime.

The German Opposition is not developing itself in a vacuum. Not only in the Leninbund, but in the organization of the Bolshevik Leninists, as well, I have within the last two years observed such methods as have absolutely nothing in common with the regime of a proletarian revolutionary organization. More than once I have asked myself in astonishment: Do these people hold such methods to be the methods of Bolshevik education? How can intelligent German workers tolerate disloyalty and absolutism in their organization? I attempted to express my objections in letters to several comrades, but I have been convinced that the fundamentals which appeared to me to be elementary for a proletarian revolutionary have found no echo on part of some of the leaders of the Opposition, who have formed a definite conservative psychology. It can be characterized in the following manner: extreme, often sickly sensitiveness in relation to everything that concerns their own circle, and the greatest indifference in relation to everything that concerns the rest of the world. I attempted in circulars and articles, without mentioning any names, i.e., without striking at the egoism of the younger comrades, to call attention to the necessity of a decisive revision of the internal regime in the Left Opposition. I did not hit up against any objections; on the contrary, I found the very self-same formulations in the official publications of the German Opposition. However, in practice the directly opposite road was taken. When I again breached the question of the disparity, in my letters, I met only with irritability.

A whole year passed with these attempts to regulate the matter without a sharp organizational crisis. The comrades whose policies appeared particularly dangerous to me occupied themselves in the course of this time mainly with the consolidation of the positions of their own circle. They achieved a measure of success in this -- at the expense of the ideological and organizational interests of the German Opposition. In the general work of the latter, there can be noticed a certain lack of initiative, stagnation, laxity. Nevertheless, a fierce struggle is being conducted for the self-preservation of the leading circle. In the final analysis this leads to a deep internal crisis, the basis of which consists of the contradiction between the progressive needs of the development of the Left Opposition and the conservative policies of the leadership.

In the course of the last few years I have received from Saxony, Berlin, Hamburg, a series of highly disturbing communications and documents, and also urgent demands that the International Opposition intervene in the German crisis. These are the circumstances that force me to unfold a whole series of questions that are bound up with this crisis before all sections of International Left, for their judgment.

One of the extreme representatives of this circle-conservatism is Comrade Landau. His school is the typically "Austrian" school in the sense referred to above. Landau is the founder, the educator and the protector of the Austrian Mahnruf-Group. We have seen this group in action. It can surrender its ideas but not its leaders. The fact alone that Landau has decided to defend the Mahnruf-Group in the revolutionary milieu and to demand for it a leading place in the Opp-

sition is eloquent enough. That these people are today with Brandler, tomorrow with us, then unite with Graef and finally return to their old empty place again; that these people have fought for their empty place in the camp of the Left Opposition with poisoned weapons, all these may have been "mistakes" (today Landau realizes this but all these mistakes step to the background before the fact that these people are the political clients of Landau. That is in fact the picture of the clique, i.e., a group that cares about persons, but not about ideas.*

No less wrong is the position of Comrade Landau in the French question, especially since unfortunately it is harder here for the German worker to pursue the development of the ideological struggle than in Austria.

Syndicalism is at present the specific form of opportunism in France. The departure from Communism and the proletarian revolution most often and most easily takes on syndicalist forms in France. To recognize the opportunist content underneath this form and to unmask it, is the first task of the French Communists. The old leadership of the French League did not do this, in spite of warnings and advice. This led to the fact that a semi-syndicalist faction formed itself inside the League, which, working in the trade unions, became a high wall between the League and the trade unions, instead of a link between them. As a result, the growth of the Left Opposition was retarded for a number of months. Comrade Landau had the opportunity to pursue the developments of the French crisis, since he reads French and since he collaborates in the French press. I, for my part, insisted in a series of letters that, in view of the extreme seriousness of the situation, they make themselves familiar with the French crisis and help the French comrades by means of their German experiences. Therein, indeed, consists Internationalism in practice! Since, however, the personal connections of Landau were with the French group that was conducting a false policy, Landau systematically prevented the German Opposition from taking a correct position on this central question. The policy of concealment, reservations and maneuvers on the French question is being continued by the German leadership to this very day. More than that: Comrade Landau lets no opportunity pass by to attack the new leadership of the League, which strives to correct the old mistakes. That is the unvarnished truth, which will be clear to every Opposition worker tomorrow!

Berlin and Leipzig

The politics of the circle, the politics of personal connections and combines appears to us in even crasser form, when we see how Comrade Landau behaves toward those elements of the Left Opposition in Germany and even toward whole organizations of workers, who allow themselves a critical attitude towards his actions.

The Leipzig organization is the strongest and most active organization of the Left Opposition in Germany. The positive features of this organization are indisputable; active and successful attempts to penetrate into the ranks of the Party; proletarian objectivity; organizational initiative. In general, just those qualities that the Opposition has been lacking in until now. Precisely for this reason, because the Leipzig organization could sense its growth and stand on its own feet, it expressed an anxiety for its independence, and demanded that its communications and views be given a place in the organ of the faction, and did not tolerate peremptory commands over its head. We must not forget that even if we are centralists, then, only as democratic centralists who employ centralism for the revolutionary cause and not in the name of the "prestige" of the authorities. Whoever is acquainted with the history of the Bolshevik Party knows what a broad autonomy the local organizations always enjoyed; they issued their own papers, in which they openly and sharply, whenever they found it necessary, criticised the actions of the Central Committee. Had the Central Committee, in case of principle differences, attempted to disperse the

*With what conscientiousness Comrade Landau informs the local organizations is shown by a letter from Ludwigshafen directed to me, on February 2nd, which says: "As far as the position of Comrade Landau is concerned in the Austrian question, the events in Germany have confirmed it." Is any commentary needed here?

local organizations or to deprive them of the literature (their pens and water) before the Party had had an opportunity to express itself -- such a Central Committee would have made itself impossible. Naturally, as soon as it became necessary, the Belobriv Central Committee could give orders. But subordination to the Committee was possible only because the absolute loyalty of the C.C. toward every member of the Party was well-known, as well as the constant readiness of the leadership to hand over every serious dispute to the judgment of the Party. And, finally, what is most important, the Central Committee possessed extraordinary theoretical and political authority, gained gradually in the course of years, not by commands, not by shouting down, not by beating down, but by correct leadership, proved by deeds in great events and struggles.

The misfortune of the Berlin Executive, led by Comrade Landau, is that it has not and could not attain even the slightest authority. It is sufficient to recall the fact that this Executive held an extremely miserable conference in October, which did not adopt a resolution on a single important question. There are not many such examples in the history of revolutionary organizations! The weakness of the Executive on questions of real revolutionary leadership is fully patent. This weakness is entirely comprehensible by itself. Lack of preparation and experience can be overcome only in the course of time. However, the deep mistake of the Executive and particularly of Comrade Landau consists in the fact that the less its leadership gives to the organization, the more blind obedience do they demand from it.

In the last letter I quoted the decision of the E.C. of January 19th, which decides that on the question of the policy of the French League -- consequently not on a question of immediate practical action in Germany, but on a question of a principled international discussion -- all members of the organization are to represent not their own opinions but those of the Executive. What opinions? The ones which the Executive does not have? It is only preparing the elaboration of its opinion. I read this decision over and over again and rubbed my eyes. And even now, I must still remind myself that it is not a question of a poor anecdote but of a fact. This example permits us more than any journalistic exercise to penetrate into the consciousness of many an Opposition leader. When a man holds mass for the soul of his deceased father, I would without knowing anything about him say with certainty: He has nothing in common with materialism. In the same manner, when I read the decision of the German Executive, which forbids its membership to think differently concerning the French question from Comrade Landau (who has not found the time to think it over himself) I must say: Here is such a combination of journalistic pride and premature bureaucratism as surpasses, in its barrenness and absurdity, all the samples offered by the Stalin-Babitskaya bureaucracy. A milder evaluation I cannot find.

Now, it is not at all remarkable, with such customs, that the independence of the Saxon organization appeared to the infallible Executive as "federalism" and such similar deadly sins. A war broke out on the part of the Executive that was puny, devouring and unprincipled. For months I observed this struggle with increasing anxiety, attempting to induce the Berlin and the Leipzig comrades to come to a practical agreement, since there were not any differences in principle, so that the conference, which was held last fall, would not be devoted to petty wrangling, but to the questions of revolutionary struggle. Above all, it was a question of Comrade Landau as the acknowledged leader of the Executive and Comrade Well as the acknowledged leader of the Saxon organization.

It is not superfluous to remark that whereas he demands absolute obedience from the local organizations, Landau has not shown the slightest intention of subordinating himself to the decisions of the International Opposition. After the bureau had adopted the draft platform for the Austrian Opposition with two votes against that of Landau, Landau proposed behind the back of the Bureau, in which he had remained in the minority, to elements near to him in Vienna, that they ignore the draft of the Bureau and adopt his, Landau's, draft. That is no accident. People, lacking internal discipline, demand it from others all the more boldly.

After a series of urgent letters from me, Landau answered on the 5th of September, last year, with a communication that made a very favorable impression on me. I cite a quotation from this letter verbatim: "At present quiet rules over here, apparently. I hope very much that a peaceful and loyal collaboration between Well and ourselves will be achieved permanently. Personally, this seems all the more important to me, since Well is the only one who will be able to continue to direct the political work, should I leave Germany. These reflections do not proceed from factional machinations, but from the fact that we 'emigrants' from the Comintern very often fall victim to the diseases of emigration. Subordinate political and tactical mistakes or differences lead, under conditions of tense and hostile personal relations, to heavy shocks which can be avoided if their causes and dangers are known."

These lines are completely correct in essence. Especially interesting for us is the estimation that is given of Well, as the only person capable of directing the entire organization in case Landau leaves. Since it concerns a revolutionary proletarian organization, it is clear that Landau, with this characterization, considers Well as a revolutionary, firm in principle and fated for a leading role. A more praiseworthy characterization can hardly be given.

On the 30th of January this same Landau writes to me: "And the Well group? We will expose the centrist character of this group thoroughly before the International Opposition. It will be hard for you to consent to the views to which the Well group subscribes. It will be still harder for the Well faction to prove their calumniations and to prevent their liquidation by the National Committee."

The Executive itself speaks in its letter of February 5th of "the cleansing of the German Opposition from the centrist Well faction". At the meetings there is talk of the inevitability of the expulsion of the Well group, i.e., of a split. In this manner Comrade Well has been transformed in the course of a few weeks, which, moreover, he spent outside of Germany, from the best (according to Landau himself) and only (in case of Landau's absence) leader of the German Opposition -- into a centrist, who must be crushed, expelled and destroyed. It is not a question of one person alone, but of an entire organization.

What does this mean? What are the political criteria that Landau employs, which permits him so easily to transform the best into the worst? And can we remain serious in regard to the evaluations that Comrade Landau gives in such important questions?

In his letter of January 6th, Comrade Frankel quoted among other things the above flattering estimation of Well. What does Landau, convicted by such crushing contradictions, do then? He keeps silent for some time -- for five days -- and lets the Executive answer. Here is what the latter writes on the 25th of January: "The National Committee declares that the estimation of Comrade Well given by Comrade Landau has nothing in common with the point of view of the N. C. The National Committee sees in such an estimation an expression of the well-known conciliatory attitude of Comrade Landau in regard to an unprincipled and politically completely defeated faction (Well) RAISED UPON THE BASIS OF German Federalism, etc."

*In replying to the letter of Comrade Frankel with little twists Comrade Landau, as is always the usage in unprincipled struggles, seeks to discredit Frankel personally: a green student, Trotsky's secretary, etc. If I am not mistaken, Comrade Landau belongs to the same category of employees as Frankel. Despite his youthfulness, Comrade Landau has participated in the revolutionary movement for seven years, since 1927 in the ranks of the Opposition in Czechoslovakia and France, where he represented the Czech group at the April Conference of the International Opposition at a time when I had known nothing whatever of his existence. If Frankel does aid me my work, then because it is our common work, in which he has no less a right to his own views and to defend them than Landau has. But the difference consists in this, that the letter of Frankel contains indisputable facts and political criticism, whereas Landau's reply is full of tricks and insinuations.

Thus the Executive "discovered" Landau who, it has been seen, is known (!) for his conciliatory attitude toward the "unprincipled faction" of Well. We are not interested whether Comrade Landau has written these lines himself, or whether he had someone else write them. That is a question of technique. The whole game is quite transparent. Pontius is unmasking Pilatus. But politically the question is extremely deplorable, for the Executive as well as for Landau. What is conciliationism? Conciliationism is hidden, masked opportunism or contrivance. If Comrade Landau is "known" for his conciliationism towards an unprincipled faction, that means that his hidden opportunism or semi-opportunism is "well-known". But why then does the Executive act as if it were only a trifle? Why is Pontius so considerate to Pilatus?

However, the matter is far worse. Wherein and how is this conciliationism towards contrivance disclosed in action? In the fact that the conciliator does not take into account the danger of contrivance, and is, therefore, inclined to moderate his opposition toward it. This is at present the position of Graef. He is a typical conciliator toward contrivance. But the position of Landau in September has nothing in common with this. Landau does not say: we must moderate our struggle against the contrivance Well. No. Landau says: We must put Well at the head of the organization, since he is the only man fit to direct it. Wherein does his conciliationism consist?

In reality, the Executive says something altogether different. Comrade Landau is incapable to differentiate between a person who must be put at the head of the organization and one that must be expelled. That is what the Executive says! But, alas, Comrade Landau says the same thing about himself. For, after he has forgotten about his "well-known" conciliationism, he repeats five days later (January 30th) the words of the Executive concerning the necessity of crushing the Well faction, this time in his own name!

The fact that the conciliator Landau is so irreconcilable toward the Saxon faction becomes particularly eloquent in comparison with the attitude of Landau toward the Mahnraf Group. Here we are concerned with a group that is with the Left Opposition on Monday -- with Brandler on Tuesday -- on Thursday with Graef; but still it is "his" group. Anyone who criticizes it is his enemy. Comrades Hille and Molinier, who gave a completely unprejudiced account of this group, are subjected to entirely impermissible attacks on the part of Landau. The Saxon organization is another matter. To be sure, it has not vacillated from the Left to the Right. But --- it wants to reflect and judge independently, participate in the decisions and not simply subordinate itself to commands from the higher organ. This organization must be crushed; the national organization must be cleansed from it. Here we have two different sorts of cliques. What is this due to? To a Communist criterion? To revolutionary interests? Landau himself has told us in the letter quoted above, dated September 5th: He called his own sickness, the emigration sickness, and described it correctly as artificial hindling of political differences due to hostile personal relations. The word "emigration" does not at all hit the mark here. The word clique is more exact. Then the crying contradictions are completely solved. They arise from the changing requirements of a clique, which is fighting for its existence and for its domination at all costs and everything else notwithstanding.

We have been promised proof in the near future that the Well "faction" must be destroyed. But up to now this has not yet been proved. No one has as yet read a single article in which these accusations have been justified. In the meantime, the destruction has already begun. In Hamburg, comrades have been expelled for solidarity with Leipzig against Berlin. The relations between Berlin and Leipzig have practically been broken off. The Leipzig members are no longer invited to the sessions of the Executive. What is the basis in principle of these splitting tactics? Landau promised to explain them "very thoroughly" to us, apparently after the split will have been promulgated. Unfortunately, everything is stood on its head, on this question. Wherever it has been a matter of struggle around tendencies and not between cliques, the process has assumed an entirely contrary character: first political differences of some sort arise. They are clarified at meetings and in the press. Responsible revolutionaries see to it that the discussion of principles does not disturb the organizational unity. The foreign organizations are given an opportunity

to express their opinions, etc. Only after this wholesome ideological struggle shows as its result that the two standpoints are irreconcilable, only then does the hour of the split strike. This was the case with the Leninbund, where the profound discussion of principles assumed an international character before Urbahn's abandoned the International Left. This was the case with the Belgian Opposition, where the discussion was conducted at meetings and in the press for months, with the participation of the Russian and the French Oppositions before the split took place. In France the discussion was held twice (on the question of the "turn" in the Comintern and on the trade union question) in the columns of the press and at meetings with the participation of other national sections, in which the change of the political line was achieved without a split.

What is the situation in Germany? Factually, the Executive has already proclaimed the split. On the other hand, the polemic on principles is promised only for the future. The clique struggle is a caricature of the ideological struggle. And in caricatures, the feet often take the place of the head and the head that of the feet.

The Theoretical Basis of Comrade Landau's Splitting Policy

...As we were writing these lines, the February number of the Berlin "Kommunist" came in, with the article "Centrist Currents". The article bears a purely ritualistic character. This is an All Souls' mass for the murdered and not an open discussion. Fortunately, the murdered are still alive and whole and we hope to fight in common with them against the class enemy. We hope at the same time that Landau too -- although not immediately -- will find his place in our ranks and that he will learn to differentiate ideological struggle from unprincipled clique scuffles.

At first sight, the article in the "Kommunist" shows that the editorial board is not capable of making this distinction. Formally, the article is directed against Graef and even against the Mahnuf Group. Factually, it has the task of justifying the destruction of the so-called Well faction. The whole article is a masking, an imitation, if not a falsification, of ideas. Landau grasps ideas in general very easily and formulates them easily. But I fear it is just for this reason that he does not think them out to the end. If we should want to submit the article to serious criticism, then even if we were ten times more considerate than Landau in his criticism against the Saxons we would have to express a very severe judgment. Landau's arguments against Graef bear a verbose character and most often hit beside the mark. Landau dismisses economic arguments with general formulae, which do not answer the questions posed by Graef.

In so far as Graef claims against the bourgeoisie and the social democracy that the prime reason for the upward swing of the collectives were not administrative but economic factors, he is correct. Just as soon as Landau turns against this summarily, he makes incorrect use of the correct ideas of others and facilitates Graef's task.

When Landau speaks of the growth of capitalist elements in the U.S.S.R., without defining what he means by them, he hands a weapon to Graef, who, in distinction from Landau, knows the facts and figures and follows the economic life of the U.S.S.R., even though he draws from his knowledge conclusions that are false to the root.

In the same manner, Landau shows in his theses to the conference, which represent a slovenly hodge-podge from old works of the Russian Opposition, how lightly and carelessly he regards programmatic questions by hastily snatching up ready formulae, without grasping, at all times, their connection with the living process of development. I would prefer to speak of all this in an entirely different tone, in propaganda articles, in private letters to Landau calling attention to his mistakes, aiding him to master these questions. But for that it is necessary for Landau to have the desire to learn seriously. Unfortunately, Landau's entire attention is turned in a different direction. Without conscientiously attempting to clarify himself on all the questions unclear or disputable for him, he sets all

sorts of insinuations into motion behind the scenes against all those who are disinclined to smash the "Well faction" together with him. This alone forces me to point out that the superfluous determination of our surgeon can be explained by the fact that he does not know anatomy and is always prepared to carve, no matter where it extends, as long as this is required by considerations of "prestige".

The real object of the article in the "Kommunist" is to unloose Landau's bands not only against the Saxons, but also against the International Secretariat, against the Russian Opposition, against the majority of the French Opposition, and, I take it, against the majority of the other national sections. In order to facilitate his task, Landau begins by creating an alibi for the heroic deeds of his Vienna friends, the Mahruf Group. Landau corrects the Mahruf Group, gives it a paternal reprimand and scorns his disciples for not having shown that "irreconcilable attitude" which Landau awaited from them. Yes, all the Mahruf Group lacks is an "irreconcilable attitude"!.....

At the same time it can be seen clearly from this article, which is politically false from beginning to end, that Landau in opening his arms wide open to the Mahruf Group, is preparing to crush the Saxons, the Hamburg people, the International Secretariat and all others. At any rate, all these latter permit themselves to be crushed.

But still, wherein does the centrism of the Saxons consist? The whole matter refers, it appears, to a disputable formulation regarding the U.S.S.R. The Saxon comrades object to the expression "elements of double government" in the U.S.S.R., that I have employed, since according to their opinion such an expression can lead to false conclusions in the sense of Urbahns, namely, that the dictatorship of the proletariat does not exist any longer in the U.S.S.R. It is best, however, to quote the formulation of the Saxon comrades themselves, as expressed in their document of January 23rd:

"The formulation, 'elements of double government', means more (than elements of Thermidor, elements of Bonapartism, L.T.). It refers to the concrete situation between February and October 1917, when beside the bourgeois ruling apparatus, the provisional government, there existed already the proletarian state apparatus, the Soviets. Applied to the present situation in Russia, that would mean that beside the proletarian state apparatus, the Soviets, there exists an apparatus of the counter-revolution, which in case of a counter-revolution would play the same role as the Soviets in the inverted case. Such an apparatus does not exist at present in our opinion, has not been proved to us to exist in the course of the discussion. We are against the use of the expression 'elements of double government' for the reason that, aside from the fact that it adds now fuel to the old Urbahnist confusion, it can give occasion to false political prognoses. We believe that in rejecting this expression, we act in the spirit of Comrade Trotsky, who, in the recent past, has turned quite sharply against the schematic application of historic analogies....After all this, we believe that there is no contradiction between our rejection of the formulation 'elements of double government' and our agreement with the International Opposition in the fundamental questions of the condition in Russia."

The most elementary conscientiousness would have required that the "Kommunist", as soon as it had decided to open up a polemic with the Saxon comrades, publish its own formulation on this question. That would have offered the reader a possibility of judging the real extent of the differences. The Russian Opposition has been protesting for years against the outrageous methods of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which snatched out single phrases or even words from our documents, and on this basis opened up a furious persecution against the Opposition. Honest information is the basis of ideological life in the Party. Honest information is the first letter of Party democracy. The editorial board of the "Kommunist" does not give honest information. It cannot resolve itself to cite literally the quotation on the basis of which it builds up its entire accusation. By a simple indication that the Saxons demand the elements of double government, the "Kommunist".....

centrism. Landau, known in September for his conciliationism and in February for his irreconcilable attitude, explains: "This question is the main criterion for the International Opposition." Which question? The essence of the question or its formulation? The entire theory of the split is built up on the substitution of the form for the content, upon a flat sophism, on a play of words.

I believe that the fears of the Saxon comrades regarding my formulation are correct. I do not see in them, however, any differences in principle. The Saxon comrades are wrong when they say that I have employed the disputed expression but once. It is to be found even in the platform of the Russian Opposition, although in a more careful, in an extremely moderate form. On one of the first pages of the platform the cutting off of the growth of the enemy forces is designated as one of the tasks of the Party, "by preventing them from establishing the condition of a factual, even though concealed, double government, towards which they are striving". This formulation was the result of long discussions. I am defending a categorical expression, which contains the direct indication of the fact that certain elements of double government already exist. Some comrades had objections in general, because of very nearly the same reasons as the Saxon comrades, to the mention of double government. After some dispute, we came to the above careful formulation. Each one among us considered the dispute on the formulation as a principle dispute. Basically, we were in agreement, and judged the effect of one or the other formulation from a propagandistic point of view.

The Saxon comrades are right when they say that we have become used to connect double government only with the period from February to October 1917 in Russia. In reality, double government, or rather, elements of double government (which is hardly the same thing) characterize all revolutionary and counter-revolutionary periods, or, more generally speaking, all epochs, in which the change of classes at the helm of power is being prepared or carried out. Yet, I cannot, in this instance, stop at this highly important question; a chapter of my "History of the Russian Revolution" is devoted to it. It is to appear at the beginning of April. I will only mention one thing here: in general, historic analogies are justified only within certain confines. It is possible also to misuse Thermidor and Bonapartism, too -- no less than elements of double government. But outside of historic analogies, it is not possible to think politically, for mankind cannot start its history anew every time.

The Saxon comrades admit "that the proletarian state apparatus is permeated with elements (partly, members of the Party) who are driving in the direction of counter-revolutionary overthrow". This is a literal quotation. But in so far as these elements permeate the state apparatus, they have consequently some part of the state power in their hands and push the state machine, to use an expression Lenin, not there where the proletariat needs it, but there where it is needed by bourgeoisie. That means also, that beside the apparatus of the proletarian power there also exist elements of the power of a different class. The regime as a whole displays thereby elements of double government. But the counter-revolutionaries do not as yet possess such an apparatus -- the Saxon comrades will rejoin -- as the revolution had during the Kerenskiade. Quite correct! Precisely for this reason we speak not of double government, but of elements of double government.

The dispute has, as we see, a formal, almost terminological character. The Saxon comrades themselves consider the differences of opinion in the same light. They write: "For this reason we held a broad discussion on this subject to be superfluous. It is significant that attempts are constantly made to stir up a discussion on this subject, whereas all discussion about the burning German problems is skillfully avoided. Quite different aims than purely objective ones appear to be at the root of this." Completely true! And the reason is fully clear. It is entirely a question of petty diplomacy. Since the Saxon comrades have expressed themselves against a certain formulation of the Russian Opposition, Landau hopes thereby to stir up in this manner artificial differences of opinion between ourselves and the Saxon organization. And for such things in the main, Comrade Landau expends his forces, his inventive powers, his whole attention. In this way he forces us too to waste time in unravelling knots, tied with forethought. Woe be to the leader who carries confusion into the heads of the workers instead of clearness!

Concerning the Preparation of Bonapartism

It is worthwhile to note that concerning my words, "The preparation of Bonapartism on the scale of the Party has been completed", the same article in the "Communist states: "We do not demand from anyone to consider these words as untouchable." Why then, should the Saxons consider a different formulation, i.e., different "words" as untouchable? With Landau there always exists one law for "his own people" and another for "strangers". That is the hitch!

Neither formulation, naturally, is "untouchable"; it would be ridiculous to even speak of it. Yet, the difference between Landau and the Saxons consists in this, that the latter express quite clearly and unequivocally with what they agree in my formulation and with what they disagree, while Landau restricts himself to the very mysterious sentence: "We do not demand of anyone that he consider these words as 'untouchable'." This clause shows very clearly that Landau disagrees with something in the formulation. Why does he not say clearly: with what? In the meantime, I have been informed that Landau and his friends accuse Rakovsky of Urbansism at meetings, and Trotsky, in turn, of conciliationism toward Rakovsky. But Landau always likes to have an alibi up his sleeve. He cannot resolve himself to bring this nonsense into the press. In order, however, that his friends should not accuse him of a lack of intellectual courage, he makes a remark in his article, a glance, he bats his eyes. Unfortunately, such tricks precisely are proof of a lack of intellectual courage.

"The preparation of Bonapartism on the Party scale has been completed." What does this mean? The Party is the most essential weapon of the proletariat in the struggle against the counter-revolution. Is that which we have until now understood a party to be still in existence in Russia? No, it is no longer in existence. When all decisions are arrived at independently of the Party; when the convention can be postponed for a year, for two, three years, without anyone daring to protest against it; when Syrtsov, the chairman of the Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars), is forced to discuss the mistakes of the Five Year Plan at an illegal (!) meeting, while Bessedovsky holds the chairmanship of the Party Cleansing Commission on the eve of his leap over the wall -- then the Party exists no longer. It lives in the traditions of the proletariat, in the consciousness of the most advanced workers, in the silent psychic process of the masses, in the secret consultations of little grouplets, in the slogans of the Left Opposition. But these are only splinters and elements of the Party, whose forces we cannot gauge, whose evolution we cannot submit to an examination. The official Party has become a purely plebiscitary organization. Naturally, this degeneration has taken place on the basis of the proletarian dictatorship, which is being maintained not by the official Party, but by other, deeper forces and tendencies as yet unformed. In so far as the official Party is concerned, at the moment of the destruction of the Right Wing, the domination of the apparatus over the class and the domination of Stalin over the apparatus reached its very peak. It is impossible to continue along this path. What part of the Party apparatus and what part of the rank and file will prove to be on the other side of the barricades in case of a counter-revolution? There is no method with which to anticipate this. The plebiscitary regime has made impossible control of the changed relationship of class forces. The C.P.U. is -- unfortunately! -- not sufficient, all the more so since the C.P.U., which cheats the Blumkins and replaces them with the Agabekovs, must itself be put under control. In this sense, I say that on the scale of the Party everything has been done to facilitate the Bonapartist overthrow. This part of the process has been completed. Graef sees Kautskyanism in this sort of analysis. But Graef is not original in this: Bukharin accused us of Kautskyanism at the time we first raised the question of the Thermidorian danger. Landau believes that the sentence concerning the preparation of Bonapartism is not "untouchable". Isn't it possible to be clearer, more exact and bolder?

Unfortunately, due to lack of space, I cannot dwell on the specific and available "love of the workers", which forms the nerve of Comrade Landau's demagoguery. When he defends his Austrian clients, who have committed unworthy actions, he defends "workers against charges brought by intellectuals". When he attacks the Saxon organization, then because "intellectuals" are heading it. This flattery of the workers by the intellectual Landau covers methods which are absolutely alien and hostile to the spirit of proletarian organization. How pitilessly Marx and Engels combatted such tricks! What the workers need is not flattery, but a correct policy.

With the substance of the tasks of the German Opposition, I have particularly pre-occupied myself in my brochure, "The Turn in the Comintern and the Situation in Germany". In the process of the preparation of a real conference, I will try my best to further participate in the discussion of the programmatic, political and organizational tasks of the German Left Opposition and urgently call upon all the initiated comrades in the other national sections to do likewise.

At the present moment it is a question of averting an opportunist blow and of helping the German Opposition to issue forth from the crisis with the least difficulty and the smallest losses.

What Aims Does the Following Letter Pursue?

The necessity of this letter arose, as has been said, from the fact that all the preceding attempts to convince Comrade Landau by means of private correspondence of the incorrectness of his manner of action and of the destructibility of his methods went to naught, or more correctly expressed, led to the opposite result: Landau, at the present time, is more pre-occupied with work behind the scenes for the creation of an international faction of his own than with the revolutionary tasks of the German Opposition. Carried away by the logic of his own false position, Comrade Landau has opened up a completely unheard of campaign of agitation, not only against his opponents in Germany, but against the International Opposition as well, and particularly against the Secretariat which carries on highly responsible work, against the majority of the French Opposition and the Russian Opposition. Under such circumstances, no other alternative remains except that of referring the disputed questions for open discussion. That which could not be achieved in the individual way (by conviction, correspondence), can, perhaps, be obtained in a collective way. The German, as well as the International Opposition, must, it seems to me, reject the methods of Comrade Landau, call him to order, point out more correct methods of work and more healthy forms of organization.

One of Landau's most "daring" exploits is his declaration that I am about to liquidate his group with "administrative methods". He counterposes to this on his part the demand for an open ideological struggle. Again we have imitation, mimicry and the repetition of others' views before us. His behind-the-scenes machinations, expulsions and destruction of organizations and groups, without any principled motivation, Landau calls -- ideological struggle. My proposal to put a stop to these organizational machinations and to honestly prepare a conference he calls "mechanical administrative measures". Does Landau really believe, in all seriousness, that he can convince people or strengthen confidence in him by this sort of acrobatics?

Needless to say, I am far from the thought that the Leipzig organization must be regarded as exemplary (it does not think so itself, I hope), and I am hardly prepared to take upon myself the responsibility for all of Comrade Well's actions. On the contrary, I have disagreed with him more than once, and have never concealed my opinion from him, when I thought that he committed mistakes. They expressed themselves mainly in the fact that in the course of his defense and in outbreaks of, a great part, just indignation, Well took the path of Landau, seeing no other net except the split. The solution: "Expulsion of Landau", is incorrect, dangerous and harmful. The misfortune does not consist in the fact that Landau uses impermissible methods, but rather in the fact that an important part of the Opposition workers tolerates such methods. The task is precisely to convince these workers of the impossibility of co-ordinating Landau's regime with the regime of a revolutionary.

... we succeed in this, perhaps Landau, too-

I, for one, hope so at least -- will himself learn over again and re-arm. So, and only so, the question stands today. How it will stand tomorrow -- the next days will tell. Here much depends upon the conduct of Landau himself, for we must not leave out of sight the fact that for the preservation of unity, good will on the part of both sides is needed. On our part, this exists completely. Comrade Landau has yet to prove it in fact.

Leaders do not only teach, they also learn. The German Worker-Oppositionists must create such conditions, in which Comrades Landau and Well will march in common harness, supplementing one another.

Neither the Saxon organization nor the Landau group represent today independent currents, and even less so irreconcilable ones. But the unprincipled organizational struggle can, if it is not discontinued in time, unnoticeably become filled with alien political content. Landau has, indeed, already busied himself with artificial ideological justification of his policy, and, unnoticed to himself, he has turned his struggle against Well into a struggle against the International Left. One does not have to be a prophet to foretell that in this manner the Landau group -- without theoretical baggage, without revolutionary traditions, without political experience -- can only land in an issueless swamp. We, therefore, say to the Berlin leaders: Hold on, as long as it is not yet too late! And we warn the workers, who are with Landau: You are being led into dangerous roads!

How to return to the right path? That cannot happen for the German comrades without active International aid. The inevitable measures result clearly from the situation that has been created.

Practical Proposals

(1) It is necessary to put a stop to all reprisals, expulsions and removals in connection with the factional struggle in the German Opposition. Insofar as it is a question of purely individual cases, the questions must be examined on request, with the participation of representatives of the International Secretariat.

(2) A special Control Commission, as authoritative as possible, must co-operate with the International Secretariat in examining the appeal made by the Comrades (Hamburg, etc.) who have already been expelled, and give its decision.

(3) The conference must be prepared in advance in such a manner, that the mode of representation will allow no ground for suspicions and accusations.

(4) In all cases where organizational conflicts and objections come to the fore, an examination must be referred to the International Secretariat, in co-operation with especially trustworthy and unprejudiced comrades from other sections.

(5) The "Kommunist" must open its columns to the articles of both groups for discussion.

(6) The theses and counter-theses for the German National Conference must be published in the International Bulletin in several languages, not less than four weeks before the opening of the conference.

If these proposals or others in the same spirit are accepted by the International Secretariat and the sections of the International Left, there remains only one question to be asked: are they acceptable for the Landau group? This question can be asked even now. From the point of view of political expediency, as well as from the point of view of democratic centralism, the proposals cited above, are completely beyond dispute. If we are Internationalists, not in words but in deeds, we cannot reject the control of the International organization over its national sections. It is true, our International organization is as yet extremely imperfect. But the national sections do not stand on a higher level. At any rate, the International Organization possesses more authority, more experience, which is in this

case particularly important, and more impartiality than the national leadership, which has been transformed into the staff of one of the two fighting factions.

Can the Berlin Executive reject the aid of the International Opposition which is concerned with preserving the unity of the German Opposition and to assure the convocation of a well-prepared and conscientiously organized conference?

I believe the Berlin Executive has neither the right nor the choice to refuse co-operation which the International Opposition is at all times obliged to give.

The Berlin Executive has the floor!

Leo Trotsky

Prinkipo, February 17, 1931.

(Retranslation from the German)