

LABOR
and
SOCIALISM
in
AMERICA

by **"AMERICUS"**

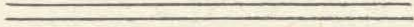
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By Americus

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I.

THE NEW SPLIT BETWEEN
LABOR AND SOCIALISM IN AMERICA.

American Communists and left-wing associates, after ten years in which they held the decisive initiative in the great advance of American organized labor, its conquest of the key and mass production industries -- after ten years in which they had apparently broken with sectarianism, are again being separated from the main body of organized labor. A deep split, which began in 1945, is being made final in 1948. Once more the isolation of Socialism from the labor movement, which has blighted American labor history, is becoming a central fact.

It is characteristic of the present situation that the American Communist Party, holding its National Convention at the beginning of August, 1948, should not even register an awareness of the significance of this split, or even that it is taking place except in certain of its detailed manifestations. It sees only a few of the separate trees, but not at all the forest. For this Convention, the forest, -- the split from the labor movement -- is an event not worthy of evaluation, nor even of recognition as a fact, the most decisive fact of current American labor history.

More than forty years ago, V.I. Lenin wrote, in a preface to the book "Letters to Sorge", the following words which, unfortunately, have again become fully valid for 1948:

What Marx and Engels most of all criticize in British and American Socialism is its isolation from the labor movement. The burden of all their numerous comments on the Social-Democratic Federation in England and on the American Socialists is the accusation that they have reduced Marxism to a dogma, to a "rigid orthodoxy", that they consider it "a credo and not a guide to action.", that they are incapable of adapting themselves to the labor movement marching side by side with them, which, although helpless theoretically, is a living

and powerful mass movement.

(Selected Works, Vol. XI, pp. 722-23, 1907)

What is taking place, both within the labor movement and in the attitude of the Communists toward it, may be glaringly illustrated by one little incident. The New York District Convention of the Communist Party was meeting to elect delegates to the 1948 National Convention. In the midst of its sessions, news came of the results of the referendum elections in the National Maritime Union (NMU) -- a disastrous defeat for the pro-communist left wing, a victory for the anti-communist camp given by an overwhelming majority of the membership, in the ratio of more than 5 to 2. The NMU, which from its foundation in 1935 until 1945, had been most solidly and militantly pro-communist, which had always before elected a majority of Communists into its leadership, had now by the most unexpected and decisive majority of its rank and file members voted itself anti-communist.

In the New York Convention of the Communist Party, the man who personally led the fight that thus ended so disastrously for the left wing, was present as a delegate. He came forward to evaluate this defeat. He dismissed it as an inconsequential and temporary setback, and promised that within a year the Communists would regain their old positions. The Convention accepted this evaluation without a question. It greeted the leader of this defeat as a hero, the main hero of the Convention, second only to the big Party leader who had guided him into this debacle.

The Convention showed not the slightest doubt of the correctness of the policies that had resulted in the NMU turning anti-communist. There was not even any question of mistakes in the execution of such policy. The collapse of the left wing leadership that had built the Union was accepted as an unavoidable event. The only Communist virtue in facing it, was considered to be bold, uncritical acceptance of it as an inevitable way-station on the road to an equally inevitable victory sometime in

the future. The man who refused any self-criticism in the moment of disgraceful defeat, was, because of his attitude, hailed as a hero by the Communist Party Convention.

Nonchalance and self-satisfaction in greeting the collapse of a great left wing labor movement, painfully built up over 15 years of intensive effort! This is the characteristic of American Communist leadership today. Such a fact gives a crushing blow to the hope that the split between American labor and Socialism belongs only to the past.

The lessons of the past have been forgotten. The old vicious cycle has been renewed. The ghosts of Daniel De Leon and the Socialist Trades & Labor Assembly, of Bill Haywood and the I.W.W., of the ultra-left sectarianism of American Communism in its first several years, hover again over the American labor movement and dictate the actions, words and thoughts of our left wing leaders. Socialism is once again being isolated from the living and powerful mass movement of American labor.

It is an historical irony that the occasion seized upon for completing this split from the labor movement has nothing to do with Socialism. It is a technical issue of whether CIO Councils as such may participate in the Wallace movement. The ideology and program of this movement is very close to, though not identical with, that of the major bulk of the labor movement, especially of the CIO. It is not even flavored with Socialism. It is emphatically capitalistic, and proclaims its aim to be that, "progressive capitalism", the very mention of which is anathema to the present leaders of the Communist Party. It is on the issue of freedom of subordinate Councils of the CIO to enter the new party of "progressive capitalism", essentially middle class in program, composition and active support, that the split of the left wing from the CIO is being consummated.

The Wallace new party is in fact, however, not the cause of the split, but merely a convenient occasion for bringing it to a head. The split was already well

begun in 1946, when Wallace was still in Truman's Cabinet, and the Communists were booing him in Madison Square Garden, while they cheered and praised Claude Pepper who has remained in the Democratic Party. No, the Wallace new party is only an incident in the split. Indeed, the Communists could support Wallace far more effectively in the trade unions, if they had not made support for Wallace a symbol of the split. Nor is the Marshall Plan the cause of the split, which began long before Marshall was in the Cabinet, and which continued to deepen even when the Communists joined a unanimous CIO Convention endorsement of Marshall.

While the Wallace new party is not the main, nor even a serious contributing cause of the split, it serves very effectively to cover up and to justify that split to the left wing membership. It creates the atmosphere of a historic mass movement in which the Communists participate decisively. This fact more than compensates the membership, immediately and emotionally, for the positions which they are losing (and even voluntarily giving up — as in the resignation of left wing officials in the farm implement, packing house, and newspaper unions) within the labor movement. What matters it, the rank and file are told and believe, if we lose official positions among millions of trade unionists, if this is the price we must pay to win a mass movement of even more millions in the new party, maybe even winning the Presidency! Who can call us sectarians, they exclaim, when we are in the very heart of this greatest of all mass movements! Thus the relapse of the whole movement of American Socialism into an ancient and dishonored sectarian separation from the labor movement, is covered up and excused by participation in the new middle-class "progressive capitalist" party of Wallace.

Even more damaging for the future than the split itself, is the attitude of the Communist leadership which hides, and even denies, that the split is taking place, that the mass of rank and file members are turning their backs upon the Communists. This leadership boasts that it is broadening and deepening its roots

among the workers, and claims it is splitting only with the "misleaders of labor", with "the agents of Wall Street" inside the labor movement.

If that claim were true, all criticism of the present course would thereby be reduced to but incidental importance. Unfortunately, the facts tell a different story. Any serious and competent examination of the facts will prove that the Communists are splitting not only with the leaders but also with the main body of the rank and file membership. This split is undermining the Party's fundamental position, and creates the most serious dangers -- for the Communists, for the whole labor movement, for the nation, and for the world.

It is the purpose of the present analysis to examine in some detail the course of events in a series of important or typical trade unions and industries. Out of this detailed examination of specific situations there will then be drawn certain lessons, which define those unsound, erroneous policies and attitudes which have led, step by step with the inevitable logic of events which are uncontrolled by wisdom and foresight, to the present relapse of American Socialism (Communism) into that isolation from the labor movement which Marx and Engels criticized in the XIX Century, which Lenin criticized in 1907 and continuously thereafter until his death, which was assailed so vigorously by the Communist International under Stalin's leadership -- an historical isolation from which the American Communists broke away in the 1930's, until 1945, but into which they are again rapidly sinking.

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II.

NATIONAL MARITIME UNION (NMU).

This Union was built in the early days of the CIO by a fusion of the former left wing Marine Workers Industrial Union with a rank-and-file revolt against the leadership of the International Seamen's Union (ISU) of

the A. F. of L. The combined forces, with the backing of the CIO, organized the seafaring workers of the Atlantic Coast, Gulf of Mexico, and Great Lakes, into a powerful Union which, especially during the war, won great improvements in wages and working conditions of seamen. Its only serious rival in the field was the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP), which remained dominant in the Pacific Area (long as an independent Union, but in later years affiliated to the A.F. of L.).

The NMU for many years, until 1946, maintained an exceptionally solid front in dealing with shipowners and government, and developed a consistent left wing position on all national and international issues of the day. It was generally spoken of as a "Communist" union on account of its consistent left wing attitude. When one takes into consideration that the NMU was operating with a body of workers who are traditionally turbulent, individualistic and even anarchistic in tendency, its achievements were most extraordinary. Communist Party prestige and authority among seamen generally were very high, although the percentage of Communists in the total number of seamen remained at all times small.

Before 1946, disturbances in the inner-life of the Union were never on a scale to seriously threaten its solidarity. There were, of course, constantly troubles fomented by secret agents of the shipowners, but these were never very successful. There were also personal rivalries and feuds among the leaders; while these were often serious, and resulted even in election battles, they were settled without the development of major differences of policy which could undermine the basic solidarity of the Union as a whole. For about ten years the Union was a fortress of left wing strength.

The seafarers of America, before the successful establishment of the NMU, suffered from the most ferocious exploitation of any section of industrial workers. They were almost slaves to their immediate bosses on shipboard, had no security of employment, and their wages

were insufficient to maintain families even at a subsistence level. As a result the seamen were reduced to a condition that could almost be characterized as lumpen-proletarian.

The NMU changed all this. It introduced ship committees to control working conditions; it achieved union control of hiring men onto the ships; it abolished discrimination against union members, and against minority nationalities including Negroes; it raised wages to a level comparable with other industries; it secured overtime-pay-rates for extra and holiday work, and so on. The resulting transformation in the life of seamen was literally revolutionary. Seamen became self-respecting citizens, maintaining families in their home ports, taking an active and intelligent part in the political life of the nation. The authority of the Union which worked this transformation rose very high among the workers.

In 1946, however, a split began to appear in the Union's leadership, which has step by step involved the entire membership in a fratricidal struggle of factions. threatening the very existence of the Union.

The factional struggle took form in disputes about how to broaden and strengthen the unity of all maritime unions. A committee for Maritime Unity was established, to include the National Maritime Union with the Longshoremen's Union (Harry Bridges, President) on the Pacific Coast, and three lesser Unions (engineers, stewards, and licensed personnel), for joint negotiation and settlement of new contracts with the ship operators. Joseph Curran, NMU President, objected to the rules adopted by this body, which he claimed made it possible for Bridges and the heads of the three smaller unions to impose decisions upon the NMU, since Curran's approval was not required to make a decision final and binding upon all. Curran also charged that Bridges' attitude toward the new contract negotiations was that it was impossible to win any significant wage increases. On the basis of these allegations, Curran publicly withdrew from the Committee for Maritime Unity, and asked the NMU membership to uphold

him. He branded the CMU as a scheme to establish Bridges control over the NMU. The Communists, leading a majority of the NMU officials, abandoned the issue of the Committee for Maritime Unity, which was officially dissolved with their agreement; but they began a campaign to remove Curran from his post as NMU President.

Curran resisted the attempt to remove him, splitting the Communist group itself on this issue. As the fight developed Curran, after some months of struggle in which he attempted to maintain his old left wing platform, finally turned for support to the openly anti-Communist camp and proclaimed the main issue of the struggle was to defeat the "Communist Party machine" attempting to dominate the Union. Curran became a red-baiter when it appeared that on the old alignment he was in danger of defeat.

The entire Union membership was quickly recruited to one or the other side, into two warring camps. The struggle began with mutual denunciations of the most extreme sort, and from there descended to the level of physical combat and even killings.

At the latest Union Convention, a prolonged affair that almost exhausted the Union treasury, the two groups were almost equal in strength, with Curran winning a slight majority on the most decisive ballots. In this alignment a most dangerous line of division was revealed in the facts that the main body of the left wing came from foreign-born and Negro seamen, while of the Curran group it was the native-born Americans and the less politically-educated membership. Anti-foreign and anti-Negro ideas and sentiments appeared and grew in the Curran group, daring to show their face for the first time in the history of the NMU. From its foundation the NMU had always prided itself on its fight for equality of Negro, foreign-born and native American seamen, and for their complete solidarity. At the latest Convention this character was obviously being dissolved in the factional struggle.

Union officials are not elected in NMU Convention,

but by a referendum vote of all members. The Convention settled nothing, therefore, and the factional struggle proceeded with renewed bitterness into the election campaign. It seemed most probable that the Curran group would win a small majority. The most primitive fighting passions were unleashed, and crystallized in rival organizations, neither of which is in any way prepared for unity except upon its own terms.

The unexampled bitterness of the fight may be indicated by the event of the killing of the Union agent in Charleston port, Robert New. His killer was Rudolph Serreo, an obscure factionalist aligned with Curran, who apparently acted in drunken revenge for his removal from a minor appointed post in the Union apparatus. The Union's National Office, with Curran's agreement, sent a representative to Charleston to investigate the killing, appointing for this purpose an opponent of Curran named McCarthy. Upon arrival in Charleston McCarthy visited Serreo in the local jail, under conditions suggesting he was acting for Curran to protect the killer. He gave him paper on which to write a note to Curran which he, McCarthy, would deliver. The killer eagerly agreed, and wrote a note of fulsome "loyalty" to Curran; the note was immediately reproduced in fac-simile in the Union paper, with the open inference that Curran shared responsibility for the killing.

In the midst of this ferocious factional struggle, the NMU was negotiating new contracts with the ship owners covering wages and working conditions for the next year. Formally there was a single united Negotiating Committee for the Union; in fact there were two rival general staffs, each issuing its own communiques and instructions to the membership, often in sharpest contradiction even to the point of ordering and prohibiting strike action. The Union journal, The Pilot, carried both sets of contradictory directives to the membership, and the rival groups of Union officials berated and blackguarded one another in its columns with a virulence much greater than that shown by either against the class enemy. The left wing held a technical advantage in the struggle, by retaining

from previous elections a majority of officials and editorship of the paper; but Curran had a substantial advantage in that the latest Convention revealed that he had a somewhat greater support in the membership.

The election results violently upset all expectations on the left. The Curran group won a smashing victory, running from a 5 to 2 majority for the presidency to a 2 to 1 majority for its weaker candidates, and occupied every elective post of the Union. Between the Union Convention and the referendum election vote, the left wing had lost the support of another half of its followers, and had become an isolated minority in the Union. The membership had rejected the left wing leadership because of the entire character of the fight which it had carried on.

In this writer's opinion, which must be frankly expressed, the origin of this factional struggle lies directly in irresponsible and unwise leadership of the left wing. This conclusion is not invalidated by Curran's indefensible course in the later stages of the struggle. His course is "indefensible" only from a principled left wing standpoint; it is, unfortunately, quite defensible from the standpoint of narrow trade unionism. It is the business of the left wing leadership to create such conditions, under which a man like Curran (not an unusual type in the labor movement) finds neither opportunity nor incentive to move in such a direction. Until the outbreak of the present factional struggle Curran played on the whole a constructive and valuable role in the Union, despite his well-known personal weaknesses and the series of problems to which they gave rise. He could have been continued in that role, if the left wing had continued to follow a wise, patient and stubborn policy of correcting his mistakes without attempting to destroy or remove him. It was wrong to try to destroy Curran because, as events have proved, the result was greater harm to the Union than to Curran's position, and in fact multiplied Curran's personal power, which without the all-out attack upon him could not have grown to such proportions.

It will be a tough, hard job to bring a reconciliation of the factions in the National Maritime Union. Reconciliation of the factions, however, is the only way to restore its former power in industry and in the labor movement. That is possible only if the left wing recognizes and corrects its errors.

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III.

THE UNITED AUTOMOBILE & AIRCRAFT WORKERS UNION (UAW).

This Union is perhaps the biggest single labor organization in America, with close to a million members. The composition of this membership is a representative cross-section of the American workingclass, recruited from all sections of the country, and from groups of various nationality-origins, including many Negroes. It became strong and established itself as the bargaining agency for all workers in the industry during the years of the rise of the CIO, from 1935 onward.

The active organizing cadres who built this Union were drawn from most various sources. There were former Union men of other industries, blacklisted and driven out of their previous occupations, and eager to renew Union activities; in this group a particularly important role was played by former miners (especially those of Communist and left wing affiliations). There were, further, the cadres built up in years of organization efforts conducted under the inspiration and guidance of the Communist Party; these men, though comparatively small in numbers, played a decisive role because of their intimate knowledge of all phases of the auto industry, and their skill in underground organization, so necessary in the initial period of organization, before the Union was strong enough to stand by itself in the open. There were the organizing cadres sent into the industry by John L. Lewis, mostly from the staff of the UMW. There also appeared a group of active, able young leaders without defined ideology or training.

And there were the cadres sent into the industry by the Socialist Party, the Trotskyites, the Lovestone group, and others, for the specific purpose of entrenching themselves in the new Union.

This extremely variegated nature of the leading cadres which organized the Union, resulted in an extraordinarily fluid inner union life which, from the beginning until recently, was in the main an unstable coalition of groups. During most of its history, despite this fact, the coalition that dominated the Union leadership had the political character of left-of-center, with the Communists playing a decisive role on the most important questions of policy and strategy. Exceptions to this rule were the brief period of Homer Martin's presidency, and some moments when center and right formed ephemeral alliances on particular issues against the left. All in all, as a general rule, the UAW was one of the foundation pillars of the CIO, helping maintain its general progressiveness and militancy, and buttressing the center-left coalition that made up the CIO national leadership.

The UAW grew strong despite the fierce factional fights that raged over the years between the groups and tendencies in its ranks and among its leaders. The Union won significant improvements and standardization of wages and working conditions. It played an active political role in the Roosevelt coalition. It became a social and cultural center for the auto workers. It became an exceptional thing for an auto worker not to be a Union member. The Union prestige rose very high.

Beginning in the late 1930s, Walter Reuther came forward more and more as leader of the oppositional trends in the Union, opposing the dominant leading coalition headed by George Addes, the Secretary-Treasurer of the Union from its early days. Reuther gathered all oppositional trends and groups under his sway, and began to fight for the Union presidency. This struggle went on for years. Finally, in 1946, Reuther was elected President by the Union Convention, with a small majority vote. During the ensuing year, the center-left coalition, which had re-

tained control of the Executive Board, lost its hold upon the membership, and in the election of delegates to the 1947 Convention by the local unions, the Reuther forces won a sweeping victory. The Convention removed all the old national leaders who had opposed Reuther, and put in their stead a full slate of Reuther supporters, including Emil Mazey, a former active Trotskyist, as Secretary-Treasurer.

It is already clear, by the middle of 1948, that the new Reuther regime in the UAW has established itself for a protracted period. The old left and center forces have been dispersed in the Union, and cannot maintain even an effectual minority opposition in the local unions. The main body of Union members have switched their allegiance away from the former leaders, to the Reuther group, and show no signs of regretting the change.

This has been a major shift in the center of gravity in the CIO as a whole. It has been reinforced by similar shifts in a series of other unions. The change marks the end of one historical phase of the American labor movement, in which the left wing was advancing to stronger and stronger positions, in which the left held the initiative and played a decisive role in determining the course of the whole labor movement (even of the A. F. of L., because the rise of the CIO dominated, for eight years, even the hide-bound A. F. of L. bureaucracy, and forced it unwillingly into progressive channels in the Roosevelt coalition).

The downfall of the left wing and its centrist allies in the UAW was the turning point of the present phase of American labor history. A careful study of this event and its causes will throw much light upon, even if it does not fully explain, the swing to the right in America as a whole, in which Labor has taken its part.

There is an easy and superficial explanation of this development. It says that "the post-war offensive of American monopoly capital" has simply overwhelmed the left wing, with the aid of "agents of Wall Street" inside of

Labor's leadership. This is much too simple and too easy an explanation. It raises more questions than it answers. For what appears new in the situation is not strength of monopoly capital and its attacks, but rather the weakening of the left wing, its separation from its allies and from the membership, and its mistakes. This applies to the left wing in general, but to the Communists in particular.

It would require a huge book to trace the pattern of left wing collapse through the maze of detailed events in which it was realized. This brief outline of the American labor movement will have to content itself by seizing upon a few of the most significant details, which when followed through will disclose the general pattern and its contributing causes.

Those persons long familiar with the inner life of the UAW will have little difficulty in recognizing the most significant detail, once it is pointed out to them. It was a simple organizational measure in the relationship between the Communists and their allies, the merger of the Communists into the Addes caucus, which wiped out the sharp line of demarcation between them which the Communists had always hitherto insisted upon maintaining. This complete merger, substituting for the former alliance or coalition of groups, was accomplished in the latter half of 1945; apparently a simple organizational step toward "more unity", it in fact represented a completely new policy. It was this new policy which played directly into the hands of Reuther, and in a short time led, with logical inevitability to Reuther's victory.

What was it which gave such political significance to the organizational merger of the Communist and Addes forces?

To answer this question, one must know the historical reasons why the Communists, during years of alliance with the Addes group, had strictly maintained their organizational separateness, up until 1945, often against heavy pressure for merger coming from the Addes group. This insistence upon separate organization of groups had particular

reasons, it was not the mechanical extension of a general policy, for in general the Communists in the CIO had welcomed most of such opportunities for merger of groups. But they could not agree to merger with the Addes group in the UAW.

The reason for this was simple. The Addes group was the strongest organizational force in the Union, with the widest control over the mass of members. Its standpoint was that of simple trade unionism, without any clear-cut political orientation. Its alliance with the Communists had grown up through years of inner-union struggle, in the course of which the Addes group learned it grew strong when allied with the Communists, but weakened when it departed from that alliance. But the Addes group never understood the reason why this was so. It did not understand why Communist guidance made it strong, and lack of such guidance made it weak. Therefore the Communists could never rely upon convincing the Addes group that its proposals were correct; they had to maintain separate organization strength to resist the Addes group when it insisted upon a wrong course. The Addes group resented this independence of its Communist allies, and often pressed for its abolition, in the name of "greater unity" but in reality to gain more freedom to follow its own, often mistaken, line in the inner union struggle.

The basic weakness of the Addes group was the illusion, which it stubbornly held, that it could defeat Reuther, who represented and organized a political tendency, by purely organizational means, without defeating him politically. Therefore the Addes group always favored organizational moves against Reuther, but always resisted taking up a political battle with him. The Communists found it necessary for years to insist upon caution in organizational moves, until they had been given political foundation among the membership, and to overcome the resistance of the Addes group to the political struggle. In short, the Addes group expressed a profound tendency to unprincipled factionalism which, if unchecked, would long ago have led either to splitting the Union or to a victory for Reuther. Reuther was on the point of victory in the Buffalo Convention in

1944, for example, largely because Addes's unprincipled factionalism had played into his hands, and was only defeated by the stubborn resistance of the Communists, organized as a separate group, to the Addes policy, which forced its modification in time to hold the Addes following against Reuther's inroads.

For several years the Communists succeeded, by their separate organizational identity in the inner-union struggle, to restrain the unprincipled factional tendencies of the Addes group in its fight against Reuther, and thus to give the left-center coalition as a whole a principled political foundation - - the decisive factor in leading masses - - and thereby to keep the Reuther group in a subordinate position in the Union.

During the latter half of 1945, the Communists abandoned this long-sustained policy in the UAW, and agreed fully with the Addes group's long cherished project to liquidate the Reuther opposition by all means, with chief reliance upon demagoguery and organizational measures. The merger of the Communist and Addes forces into a single group in the Union was a sign of the fact that the Communists had abandoned their independent policy and adopted that of Addes. Since there was no longer two policies to be reconciled in the coalition, there was no longer any necessity for two separate groups.

In the struggle that followed in 1946, Reuther won victory after victory against the merged Addes-Communist group. His first victory came in out-manoeuvring them in the strike movement.

All union leaders knew fully that the auto companies were in an exceptionally strong position to resist the first post-war strike movement, in the period of reconversion to peacetime production. The tax-refund law guaranteed them against losses through 1946, and much reconversion work required small forces. The companies were prepared to negotiate a wage advance of about half that the Union demanded. The Addes-Communist group, counting upon the militant strike mood of the membership, made intensive agitation for a strike

and no compromise on the wage demand, expecting Reuther to take the "reasonable" line of compromise, on which issue he would find himself in opposition to the mood of the members. But Reuther answered this move by becoming a super-militant and out-shouting the Addes-Communist strike demand, and himself initiating the strike movement from his position as Director of the Union's GM division. Reuther was apparently the most uncompromising of militants. He refused to compromise the original wage demands, and led a prolonged strike - until the left wing leadership of the United Electrical Union (UE), fully supported by the Communist Party, made settlement for their members employed in GM on a compromise wage scale at a level the Auto Workers could have gained in peaceful negotiations. Reuther then quickly made a similar settlement, loudly protesting that the UE leadership had forced his hand, and had compromised the whole wage movement without consultation with him or with Murray, head of the CIO. It was a clear-cut moral and political victory for Reuther, and from then on his rise to domination of the entire Union was rapid.

The Addes-Communist merged group met the situation merely by stepping up the intensity of its struggle against Reuther, denouncing his settlement of the strike, but not denouncing the UE settlement with the same company. The whole struggle degenerated into an unprincipled struggle for organizational controls. It is significant that at this stage, the Trotskyites, hitherto fully identified with the Reuther opposition, made a "division of labor" amongst themselves, one group moving over into the Addes-Communist group and occupying an influential position there without any resistance from the Communists, and the other coming more into prominence in the Reuther group (even placing its man, Mazey, as Secretary-Treasurer of the Union in the 1947 Convention).

In the field of such unprincipled factional struggle, the Reuther group soon proved that it had superior abilities and resources. It placed Reuther in the presidency of the Union in 1946, and by 1947 it had won over such a decisive majority of the local unions that it took over all offices, sweeping the Addes-Communist group completely out. The Addes-Communist group completely collapsed after its

defeat, and has shown no signs of being able to make a come-back. How little the Communist leadership understood of what was going on, is exemplified by the fact that at the moment local union elections were swinging to Reuther's side, it was urging Addes to go before the Convention as candidate for President against Reuther.

Since Reuther's complete victory, the Communist leadership continues as inept as before. Thus, when the Reuther administration made a recent wage settlement with General Motors, accepting an "escalator clause" adjusting wages in relation to the rise or fall of the living-cost index, the Communists denounced this as treason; but when the UE immediately accepted the same settlement for its members employed by GM, this was excused and apologized for. But the Auto Union members, whether they approve of the GM settlement or not, certainly do not accept the double-standard which says it was wrong for the UAW but right for the UE; they cannot see that Reuther is a traitor, while the leaders of UE are wise and fearless leaders of the working-class, on the basis of the same identical settlement for both Unions. Reuther's position has again been strengthened among the million members of the UAW, by the unprincipled character of the attacks made upon him. The Communists are more isolated than they have ever before been in the automobile industry.

The UAW, after a long history as a "left of center" Union, one of the bulwarks of the progressive and militant coalition which created and led the CIO, is now definitely opposed to the left, and has a right wing social-democratic type of leadership deeply entrenched in the mass of its membership.

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IV.

UNITED ELECTRICAL, RADIO & MACHINE WORKERS UNION (UE).

This is the third largest Union in the CIO, with something between 500,000 and 600,000 members, mainly in the mass production plants of the electrical industry.

The UE has been, from its origin, one of the most solidly left wing unions in America. Its political tendency may be traced, in the main, to the character of its organizing cadres who led it from the beginning.

The original nucleus of the UE was gathered in the small Metal Workers Industrial Union, organized in 1930, under the guidance of the Trade Union Unity League, in the days of mass unemployment and economic crisis. In those days, most difficult for building trade unions, this organization gathered a few score thousands of workers, mostly in the smaller radio manufacturing shops, and established a growing and functioning Union.

During the first years of labor upsurge under the Roosevelt Administration, 1933-1935, the Machinists Union (then a part of the American Federation of Labor), failing in its own efforts to penetrate the electrical machine industry, opened negotiations with the Metal Workers Industrial Union to enter its ranks. These negotiations were initiated by John P. Frey, head of the A. F. of L. Metal Trades Department, and long a bitter enemy of Communists and everything left wing. The pronounced left wing character of the Metal Workers Industrial Union did not, however, prevent these negotiations from being successful, and the Union entered the A. F. of L. Machinists Union, retaining a considerable degree of autonomy, and generally on terms favorable to the left wing.

Within the A. F. of L., the Union soon, in 1935, became associated with the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO), which sponsored and helped finance big organizing drives into the large plants of the industry, General Electric, Westinghouse, General Motors, etc. When the A. F. of L. expelled the CIO, the radio union was able to transfer its much-expanded membership intact into the newly-formed Congress of Industrial Organizations, and received jurisdiction for the whole electrical manufacturing industry. It soon grew into a mass Union, the present UE, and won bargaining rights for the entire industry. It brought order and constant improvement into the lives of the workers, hitherto among the most exploited, bringing their standards up from a

sweat-shop level to one comparable with the best.

There have always been relatively few Communist Party members in the UE, but its main organizational cadres, even though not party members, had grown up and were trained in the general left wing movement, and usually found themselves in agreement with the Communists on the problems of the day. The UE leadership could, therefore, be classed correctly as pro-communist, even though few were party members. The UE was thus a main pillar of strength of the trade union left wing, and one of the most successful organizations of the CIO. A main factor in its success was its homogeneous cadre of organizers, trained in the most difficult days when only left wingers tried to organize.

After its first big successful organizing campaigns, the UE leadership was much broadened out. As its president, was elected a young man who came forward as an able organizer in that period. This was James B. Carey, who soon also became Secretary-Treasurer of the CIO general organization. But during the period of the opening of the Second World War, Carey suddenly emerged as the banner-bearer of an "anti-communist" campaign, and proposed to purge the UE leadership of all left wingers as "undesirable communists", proposing at a Convention of the Union to amend its Constitution to bring this about. His proposal was rejected by an overwhelming majority of the Convention, and Carey himself was refused re-election to its Presidency.

Carey is a young man whose only direct trade union experience has been in the UE. It is therefore fairly certain that his ultra-ambitious attempt to seize the leadership of the UE and purge the left wing did not originate with himself, but that it was the project of clerical circles of the Catholic Church, of which Carey is a devout member. It is also fairly certain that this Church influence was what enabled Carey to retain his post as Secretary-Treasurer of the CIO, despite the fact that he lost his own trade union base. Phil Murray, head of the CIO, is also a devout Catholic, and his influence preserved Carey in the CIO office. But in the internal struggle in the UE, Murray maintained a scrupulously correct attitude, and did not attempt to intervene in

Carey's support. In fact, during the whole history of the CIO up to 1946, Murray resisted stubbornly all the pressure brought against him from clerical circles to break his co-operative relations with the left wing. When that break came, it was not on the initiative of Murray but of the left wing.

Carey's attempted putsch in the UE had only one realistic factor favoring its success; that was the presence in the membership of a considerable proportion of Catholics subject to clerical influence. In this, as in similar cases, however, (notably, the Transport Workers Union) the Church failed in its efforts to mobilize its religious following as an effective bloc for inner-trade union manipulation. It could not mold Catholic unionists into a group against the left wing leadership of any Union, so long as that leadership maintained a democratic inner regime and sound, successful trade union policies. The UE wisely handled the threatening Catholic issue, while removing Carey, by replacing him with another Catholic, Albert Fitzgerald, who, like Murray, refused to allow clerical circles to intervene in inner-union affairs.

Carey has continued to lead an active opposition group in the UE, since his removal from the Presidency. But he was not able to make a serious show of force, until the 1946 Convention. By that time, left wing relations with Murray were precarious, verging on hostilities, and the UE shared this general relationship; simultaneously, abnormal relations developed with some sections of the membership (bureaucratic arbitrariness in some local administrations) and these factors gave a renewed basis to the opposition. Thus Carey's forces won a series of plant elections, in places where the left wing had formerly been unchallengable, and gathered between 20 and 25 per cent of the Convention delegates - - not enough to shake the power of the Administration, but enough to show a new trend in the Union, away from the left wing leadership.

The system developed by the UE leadership to deal with these new problems is worthy of careful study. While it was immediately effective, it is storing up considerable

dangers for the future. Reduced to its simplest terms, this system was one of satisfying the left wing cadres by an emphatic left wing position on all broad, general national and international issues, while the non-political membership was given a policy on all trade union issues of wages, settlements, strike policy, and so on, which was essentially an opportunist line which Carey could attack effectively only by taking a left wing position. Since Carey is by no means such an able, flexible demagog and manoeuvrer as Reuther in the UAW, he could not effectively exploit this situation. Carey was put in the position of opposing the Union leadership mainly on general national and international questions, on which only the left wing had deep convictions for which they would fight.

The narrow trade unionist tactics followed by the UE leadership on wage and strike issues, in contradiction to the proclaimed line of the general left wing, is exemplified by its handling of the wage settlements reached in the strike movements of 1946 and 1948.

Early in 1946, a militant wage movement arose in many basic industries, around a general demand of about 30 cents per hour increase, backed by a strong strike mood among the workers. In the midst of this movement, while many unions, including the UAW, were on strike, the UE leadership took the initiative of settling with General Motors for its own members, on a compromise of little more than half the original demand. This set the pattern for the final settlement for all unions and industries. Reuther, heading the UAW strike in General Motors, charged that this compromise was made without consultation with him or with the CIO as a whole, and placed the onus for failure to win the original demands of the movement upon the left, represented by the UE.

In the 1948 wage movement, the initiative for compromise was taken, not by the UE but by the UAW under Reuther's leadership. The left wing and the Communist Party denounced Reuther's compromise as treason to the workingclass. But on the same day this denunciation was published, the UE leaders signed an identical settlement with General Motors, following

the UAW example without hesitation.

There is no evidence of serious dissatisfaction within the UE membership with either the 1946 or 1948 wage settlements. Nor is it the purpose of this study to pass judgment upon their merits or demerits. What is important is the political relationships that inevitably flow from them, that the general left wing character of the UE has come to be contradicted by its practice on wage, strike and trade questions, and indistinguishable from that of the center and even the right.

The general left wing, expressed by the Daily Worker and led by the Communist Party, has dealt with this contradiction by ignoring it and covering it up. It continues to demand a militant strike policy, and for no compromise on wage demands. It denounces the departure from these standards by right wing and centrist leaders as treason. But toward the UE the Daily Worker and the CP continues to be benevolently approving, justifying its course as one forced by unfavorable circumstance. The resultant atmosphere of a double-standard of judgment, of unprincipledness in the campaign against right and center, is unquestionably a basic factor in the general decline of left wing influence.

The UE, the only big union in which, formally, the left wing is still firmly entrenched in leadership, is thus seen to have maintained this position by de facto passing over to the position of the center in practical trade union questions. (Incidentally, it may be noted, this is true now of most left wing unions). The general left wing (and the CP) seem to find sufficient recompense in the fact that the UE is actively, uncompromisingly supporting the Wallace-for-President campaign.

It is obvious, however, that as the threatening split of the left wing from the CIO matures, the problems of UE become acute. It is doubtful if, faced with a split from the CIO, the UE can continue to maintain either, first, the solidarity of its own membership, or, second, its bargaining relation with the employers, against both the CIO

and A. F. of L. - - unless it can find a new point of support. That is where John L. Lewis, with the powerful United Mine Workers, enters the picture. Undoubtedly Lewis is interested in the half-million members of the UE. If he is negotiating with the left wing about a possible "new labor federation" that may be formed following the split in the CIO, of which there are signs, the UE is doubtless first in his considerations.

The problems of UE, as a part of such a new labor federation, would be, however, much more serious and menacing than its present troubles. UE faces a dubious and difficult future. Its role as the great left wing Union of the American labor movement is seriously undermined and in danger.

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V.

JOHN L. LEWIS AND THE UNITED MINE WORKERS.

One of the oldest American unions, the United Mine Workers, has played an exceptionally influential role in the general labor movement. From the beginning it was an industrial union, organizing all workers in and around the mines, never permitting them to be divided into separate craft unions. It was the main force in the formation of the Committee for Industrial Organization inside the American Federation of Labor in 1935, from which grew the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) as an independent body in 1937, and the founding of a network of industrial unions covering the main mass-production industries.

The policies of the United Mine Workers have, during the past thirteen years, exhibited sharp and wide fluctuations. For example, after helping found the CIO, the UMW withdrew from it in 1941; after remaining isolated for a few years, it then rejoined the A. F. of L.; recently it again withdrew from the A. F. of L., and is again isolated.

Such sudden changes in alignment and policy are the result of the vagaries of one man, John L. Lewis. He is not

only the Union's President, he is its unchallengable ruler, and the course of the Union reflects his unlimited personal power in the organization.

Instrument for the rule of Lewis in the UMW is a tightly-knit apparatus of officials, sworn to personal allegiance to Lewis, which deals swift and heavy vengeance upon anyone so unwise as to differ with him on any major question of policy. The force that maintains this apparatus in power is the mass-belief among the miners that only the personal leadership of Lewis is responsible those rising wages and improved working conditions which revolutionized the mining industry during the last 15 years.

Average earnings of miners, which were less than \$20 per week in the early 1930s, have risen to more than \$70 per week at present. The Union membership which had dwindled to a few score of thousands in the early 1930s, is now something over 800,000. This includes, besides 550,000 coal miners, more than 100,000 chemical workers, and around 150,000 in other industries, organized in the Union's famous "District 50". The Union treasury is reported to contain some \$62 million dollars, and Lewis participates in management and control of a pension fund for miners, financed by the industry, that in 1947 had over \$40 millions, and in 1948 expanded its annual income to \$100 millions.

Study of the policies of the UMW necessarily becomes a study of the personal characteristics of John L. Lewis.

Lewis became President of the UMW as a young man, during the First World War. In 1918, he led his first big wage movement, which culminated in a national strike. When the U.S. Government met this strike with a court injunction against it, Lewis said: "I cannot fight my Government", and called off the strike. Many strong opposition currents in the Union united against him on this issue, and for many years his position was constantly under attack from within the Union. In 1922, and for several years thereafter, this opposition was under the direction of the Communists. Lewis had to fight for his official position, and several times

maintained it by the simple expedient of destroying the ballots in Union elections and proclaiming his own re-election. The most effective weapon of the opposition was for years the memory of the broken strike of 1918 and Lewis' statement; "I cannot fight my Government." This experience doubtless played considerable part in Lewis' determination, in later years, to demonstrate to the miners and to the world, that he was not afraid to "fight his Government" and could do it successfully.

During the 1920s, Lewis set out to break the opposition to his rule in the Union by literally driving all Communists out of the industry. Since he obtained the cooperation of the employers in this task, he was able to carry it out, in large measure. Most of the young miners, of Communist or "left wing" affiliations, who were driven out, went to work in the automobile industry in the course of the next few years. They furnished the chief cadres which built the new and even greater United Automobile Workers Union during the middle 1930s, and were responsible for that organization's original militancy and left wing orientation.

During the first years of the Roosevelt administration, encouraged by a provision of the National Recovery Act of 1933 (Section 7a) which recognized the workers' "right to organize", a deep stirring among the workers in the mass-production industries took place, looking toward organization. The American Federation of Labor was trying to force this movement within the narrow confines of craft unionism, but without success. Lewis suddenly took the initiative to place himself at the head of this movement, by setting up the Committee for Industrial Organization, a small self-constituted body composed of Lewis, Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and a few others. Lewis contributed large funds to its work and was its directing head. It undertook to organize the unorganized workers of the main industries into new industrial unions.

Lewis, after a decidedly right-wing career up to that point, became overnight the leader of the left wing. He made peace with the Communists. and employed them freely

as organizers in most phases of the organizing drive, giving them a free hand in some industries. (He never re-admitted the Communists, however, into the mining industry). Privately, to his friends, Lewis boasted that he was "using the Communists" but could dismiss them overnight whenever he chose. But when Lewis withdrew from the CIO in 1941, and attempted to disperse that organization, it was the Communists who remained and became for the next four years the most decisive influence upon the CIO leadership, and Lewis failed.

The inner contradictions of this right wing leader heading the new left wing labor movement, can be illustrated by the role of Lewis in the establishment, a little while before the Second World War, of the left wing Confederacion Trabajo Latino-Americano (Latin-American Confederation of Labor, or CTLA). A Conference for this purpose of delegates from many Latin-American countries had been called in Mexico City by Lombardo Toledano, President of the Mexican Confederation of Labor (CTM). Lewis, as head of the CIO, was invited to attend. To the surprise of the world, Lewis accepted the invitation, addressed the Conference, and gave the new left wing Confederation his blessings.

It was only some time afterward it became known that the most powerful motive of Lewis in taking this step, was something quite outside the field of organized labor. His real purpose in going to Mexico City, for which attending the Conference served as a convenient smoke-screen, was to negotiate a deal with the Mexican Government, on behalf of a syndicate of American capitalists, to sell Mexican oil to Hitlerite Germany. The Mexican Government, having nationalized the Mexican oil industry, was in retaliation excluded from the world markets by the Anglo-American oil trusts, who controlled all available ocean oil transport. The Mexican Government was in deep difficulties. A personal acquaintance of Lewis, an "independent" oil operator by name of Davis, saw an opportunity to "make a killing" in this special situation. He quietly gathered up a few oil tankers, made connections with the Germans, and was set to do business. But he needed a quick and reliable connection with the Mexican Government, to consummate the deal before he was blocked by the Anglo-American oil trusts and their Governments. He pro-

posed to Lewis to negotiate the deal in return for a share of the profits. That was the real business of Lewis in Mexico City, before and after he addressed the Labor Conference. The deal was carried through successfully, and reportedly Lewis received a share of the profits. (In 1942, when this deal was under investigation by the Government and the U.S. was at war with Germany, the oil capitalist, Davies, committed suicide).

At present, Lewis with his United Mine Workers operate outside of both CIO and A. F. of L., in declared hostility to the leadership of both main labor bodies. He is in heavy conflict with the Government, and has been subjected to repeated injunctions, large fines, and threats of prison. He still, however, maintains powerful friends in high places in the Government, he holds great power in his control of the miners, and has ample resources to back his ambitions which grow greater with the years.

For example, at the beginning of 1948, when the miners struck to enforce the Lewis plan for administering the \$40 million pension fund, and the Government threatened Lewis with imprisonment, the "surrender" of Lewis on the technical issue was cushioned by a substantial victory. This was secured for him by the intervention of Joe Martin, Republican leader of the House of Representatives in Congress, who brought about the appointment of Lewis' choice for third trustee of the pension fund, giving Lewis the control he had been fighting for. This third trustee, chosen by Lewis and who has loyally voted with Lewis, is none other than Senator Styles Bridges, ultra-reactionary Republican member of the U. S. Senate from the State of New Hampshire.

This Senator Bridges, close ally of John L. Lewis, is at the same time the originator, backer, and chief director of that new, strange, and little-known department of the U.S. Government known as "Operation X". This is a secret-service organization, operating abroad with huge sums of money for which there is no public accounting, to fight Communism in Europe "with tactics similar to those used by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in wartime", by means of "strong-arm methods, including assassination if necessary", and to

"finance underground movements in Russia's satellite states." (The quotations are from an article in the conservative U.S. News & World Report, issue of April 9, 1948).

Fresh from his successful operation in alliance with Senator Bridges, sponsor and director of "Operation X", John L. Lewis is now preparing a new version of his former sudden and famous "left turn" when he helped establish the CIO in 1935. Now he is preparing to take over the left wing of the CIO, which is on the point of splitting away from that organization, to form a "new labor federation" separate from both CIO and A. F. of L. But whereas in 1935, the split from the A. F. of L. had the purpose and the result of the building of a new and great body of industrial unions with seven or eight million members, this latest project has neither such aims nor prospects of realization. It is little more for the left wing than a refuge for its dwindling and retreating forces, bought at the price of accepting, not an alliance with John L. Lewis, but his unconditional rulership as complete as that exercised over the United Mine Workers.

That the Communists are preparing to go more than half-way to meet Lewis in this plan, is testified to by many facts. For example, at the Boston Convention of the United Steelworkers Union, headed by Phil Murray (also President of the CIO), a delegate who was also a member of the National Committee of the Communist Party, made a speech which was simultaneously distributed as a printed leaflet in the Convention, condemning Murray and praising John L. Lewis as the only leader who had showed Labor its correct path. Another bit of testimony was the trade union session of the National Conference launching the Wallace-for-President movement in Chicago, where the left wing union leaders spoke loudly in praise of John L. Lewis, while condemning the leaders of the CIO and A. F. of L.

The most powerful friends of Lewis, in the Republican Party high command, would not be alienated by such a step, but on the contrary would be highly gratified. Lewis could take over command of the left wing, at the same time that he consolidates his alliance with the extreme right. And that is precisely the sort of complicated, high-powered job of

political manoeuvring, directed toward the single end of aggrandizing the personal power of John L. Lewis, in which that individual has become highly skilled, and toward which he has the strongest urge. Under present conditions in the American Communist movement, Lewis will meet no consistent opposition to his plans from that quarter.

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VI.

CATHOLIC CLERGY'S ACTIVITY IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

It cannot be said that the clergy of the Catholic Church were ever indifferent to the labor movement. But its intervention in the trade unions on an increasingly systematic basis is a relatively late development. It may be traced to the days of acute economic crisis in 1930-1934, when Father Rice of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, entered into active competition with the Communists for leadership of the Unemployed Councils movement. His example was followed by priests in many localities. When the CIO trade unions arose in 1935 and after, such priests followed it very actively, and soon gained centralized Church support for their work. In the late 1930s, this was given a certain organized structure in the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU).

In its first years of activity the ACTU was notably unsuccessful in its work. It stressed anti-communism as its almost sole principle and purpose. In industries where a large proportion of the workers are Catholics, it tried to seize leadership from the pro-communist left wing forces by frontal assault and open campaigns. This was notably the case in relation to the United Electrical Workers Union and the Transport Workers Union. All these efforts collapsed, even when the Church threw all its forces into the struggle, going so far as to give its worker-adherents instruction directly from the Church altar on trade union questions, and threatening them with eternal damnation if they supported the left wing leadership. But the mass of Catholic workers went their own way in trade union affairs, resisted the pressure of the clergy, and maintained their

solidarity with the main body of non-Catholic workers and the left wing leadership.

Responsible leaders in high positions in the labor movement, such as Phil Murray and George Addes, although devout Catholics kept aloof from the ACTU and even condemned its activity for many years. The ACTU was defeated in its first campaigns and left in a position of sectarian isolation.

Gradually, under the impact of these defeats, the Church redirected the ACTU to more effective tactics. It kept the name of the Church in the background in matters of internal union politics, and brought it into publicity more and more as a "helper" in strikes and wage movements in support of an entire union. For example, in 1943, when the TWU was fighting for wage increases for subway workers in New York City, and for recognition as bargaining agent, it came into head-on collision with Mayor LaGuardia, the progressive; but Archbishop Spellman, later Cardinal, threw his support to the solution proposed by the Communists, and when this support was demonstrated, LaGuardia accepted it also. The Archbishop gave his "blessing" to a leading Catholic layman who headed a special Commission to put the settlement into effect. This victory of the TWU stabilized it as the effective organization of New York transport workers, and extended its organization nationally. A later example is the Catholic Church operations in the recent packing-house strike, during which in Chicago the Church was made the strike-relief center, the clergy publicized its support very effectively. These are outstanding, but not exceptional, illustrations of the new course of the Church.

Meanwhile, in inner-union politics the ACTU has worked behind the scenes to build a general coalition of all anti-communist groupings (even including the Trotskyites wherever they have any strength), while keeping the name of the Church as much as possible out of the public eye in this connection. The clergy became "tolerant" of all varieties of ideology among its anti-communist allies. Thus it actively fought for the election of the Protestant social-democrat, Walter Reuther, and the Protestant Trotskyite, Emil Mazey, as chief officers of the UAW, helping to destroy the old

administration of the Union headed for years by the Catholic, George Addes, for the single reason that Addes maintained working relations with the Communists.

For years, until 1945, the left wing was able to throw back and scatter the attempts of the reactionary clergy to mobilize Church followers in the trade unions for political purposes. The Church itself, during much of this time was, on the whole, supporting President Roosevelt and his progressive policies, although with increasing reservations. This Church support was largely the result of the influence of Cardinal Mundelein of Chicago, a "liberal" Catholic hierarch who even spoke approvingly of the inclusion of the Communists in the same general political camp with Catholics. Even on the burning issue of Spain, the reactionary higher clergy did not have clear sailing, and its head-on assaults upon the left wing on this issue did not strengthen its hold upon its own members, not to speak of the general public; a Gallup poll revealed that more than 40 per cent of Catholics disapproved the Church's support of Butcher Franco, and this dissent, of course, came in the main from Catholic workers and trade unionists.

The decisive factor of left wing success in defeating the attacks of the clergy was, unquestionably, its prudent and careful tactical handling of the issues of the struggle. The left wing leadership did not permit its position to be misrepresented as anti-Catholic, and carefully avoided the slightest coloration of traditional anti-Catholicism as it was known in the 19th and early 20th centuries in America. Any touch of that traditional anti-Catholicism on the side of the left wing would have driven the Catholic workers as a body into the arms of the reactionary clergy. On the contrary, the left wing demonstratively supported Catholic trade union leaders who followed a progressive course. When the Catholic, Carey, was removed as President of the UE upon the defeat of his attempted anti-communist purge, the left wing elected in his place another Catholic, Fitzgerald. This tactic was consistently followed until 1945, and the clergy was disarmed of its most effective mobilizing cry, defense against anti-Catholic prejudice.

Since 1945, the left wing decline in strength has been accompanied by a rise in the influence of the ACTU and the clergy. A straw in the wind is to be seen in Phil Murray, formerly an opponent of the ACTU, now sending greetings to its National Conference. As the left wing declines in strength, the ACTU becomes more militant. From this juxtaposition of trends, the false and dangerous theory has arisen that the Church is responsible for the decline of the left wing, because it was not militantly enough exposed and combatted. This theory has been published in an article by James Higgins, in the National Gazette, newspaper of the Wallace-for-President movement, issue of August 1, 1948. Higgins' theory is generally accepted by the left wing and the Communists.

As a result of this false and dangerous theory, anti-Catholicism has again become established in the left wing. Anti-Catholic slogans and cliches abound in left wing discussions, and this is literally driving hundreds of thousands of healthy Catholic workers who had followed the left wing faithfully for years, even through the Spanish civil war, back into the arms of the reactionary clergy. A vicious circle of religious division within the trade unions has been initiated, and the left wing, instead of breaking this circle, is accelerating its development.

The rapid deterioration of relations between the left wing and Catholic workers is a by-product of the general decline of left wing influence; then, as the left wing relapses into a doctrinaire anti-Catholic attitude, this becomes a factor contributing to further decline of the left wing strength.

The left wing has lost much and gained nothing by abandoning the policy of "the outstretched hand" to the Catholic workers, and its relapse into dogmatic anti-Catholic propaganda. The correction of the left wing tactical approach to Catholic workers is a necessary, even though a subsidiary, phase of the whole problem of left recovery.

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VII.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM
OF PARTY-UNION RELATIONS.

The long-noted American "backwardness in the understanding and use of theory" in the labor movement, is the product of the historical isolation of Socialism from the labor movement. This isolation has cut off the labor movement from the source of theory, and has condemned the Socialist movement to sectarian sterility.

It has been around the problem of Party-Union relationships that Socialism became isolated from the American Labor movement. It is around this question again, in 1948, that the Socialistic left wing of the labor movement is declining and being driven into isolation.

In the countries of continental Europe this issue had quite a different form than that taken in America. There the Party of Socialism developed a mass basis in the workingclass in advance of the rise of the trade unions. Its authority was established before that of the unions, the union leadership was trained in the school of Socialism, and the two were organically connected. There was no head-on collision between Party and trade union leadership on the principle of Party leadership of the workingclass; even when collisions occurred, the issue was not whether the Party should play a decisive role in guiding the trade unions, but rather which tendency in the Party most truly represented the socialist course, and, later, when the Socialist-Communist split occurred, which of these was the real Party of Socialism. In continental Europe the trade unions grew up in a workingclass already committed to socialism.

In America, on the contrary, the trade union movement grew to mass proportions in advance of the Party of Socialism, and was non-socialist in its prevailing ideology. The American Socialist movement, developing under the strong ideological influence of the more advanced European socialist movement (transmitted with especial strength by the waves of European migration to America), uncritically adopted the atti-

tudes, methods and techniques of European Socialists toward the trade unions, and even, as in the case of De Leon, exaggerated them. They assumed that the leading role of the Party in the general labor movement should be exercised almost as a law of nature.

But whereas in Europe such a relationship grew up naturally, because Socialism, as the general goal, had been established in the workingclass in advance of the rise of the trade unions, on the contrary in America the situation was quite otherwise. When American Socialists demanded a leading role in the trade unions which they had not first achieved by winning general support of their Socialist goals, and by winning majority confidence in their ability as leaders - - then such a demand for the leading position became transformed into an abstract principle of authority which the trade unions energetically rejected.

Gompers became the unchallengable leader of the American labor movement for forty years precisely through the utilization of this issue. He rejected the claim of the Socialist Labor Party, under Daniel De Leon, that its leading role should be recognized by seating its representatives in all trade union councils. When Gompers secured a big majority support in the trade unions for his rejection of this claim, De Leon led the Socialist Labor Party into an abortive attempt to set up a new labor movement, called the Socialist Trades and Labor Assembly. Gompers, in the course of defeating De Leon, gave the American labor movement an anti-Socialist ideology which it did not have before.

The Socialist Party was formed, among other reasons, as an attempt to liquidate the feud between De Leon and Gompers, to avoid the disastrous struggle between Party and trade union leaderships. Under the leadership of Debs and Berger, the SP rejected the dogmatic course of De Leon. But in its place they took the course of "neutrality" in relation to the labor movement's problems and policies, and thereby were impaled upon the other horn of the dilemma. The failure of the attempt to separate trade union from general political problems, left Socialism still isolated from the labor movement, and left the labor movement under the practical subordination to capitalist politics

and capitalist parties. Even so, however, the SP under Debs became a larger mass movement in proportion to the size of the workingclass than any Party of Socialism has attained since; but it remained isolated from the organized sector of labor.

In 1905, recognizing the failure of the "neutrality" policy, a part of the SP leadership again reverted to the De Leon policy, joining in the launching of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), projecting an entirely new labor movement built on a blue-print of perfectly coordinated industrial unions with a socialistic program. But the IWW also came to grief on the issue of the role of the Party; it turned away from socialism to anarcho-syndicalism, and the socialists who helped launch it withdrew. The IWW had some success in organizing migratory workers, and led several militant mass strikes of factory workers (Paterson and Lawrence textile strikes, for example), but failed to establish significant permanent mass organizations. It still exists, but has exerted little mass influence for 30 years. Intended by its founders to bridge the gap between Socialism and the labor movement, in practice it served to deepen that split still more.

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the writings of Lenin gradually became known to the American Socialist movement. They exerted a profound influence, and the large majority of American Socialists wanted their Party to join the Communist International. But the SP leadership expelled the lower organizations that turned to Lenin, and the American Communist movement came into existence in 1919 as a split from the SP, and itself split in two parties. The first American Communist Parties began with an ultra-leftist orientation, and almost automatically continued the De Leonist attitude toward the labor movement. Lenin's book, "The Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism'", with its strong advocacy of working within the mass labor movement, appeared in America in 1920, and brought about a new turn toward the labor movement. For several years, from 1921 to 1924, the Communists gathered a growingly powerful left wing movement in the A. F. of L., under the Trade Union Educational League. Socialism was again making an effective approach to the labor movement.

In 1924, however, the Party again came into head-on collision with the trade union leadership, in the struggles around the rising LaFollette third-party movement, which the Unions supported and the Party opposed. Its split with the Chicago Federation of Labor on this issue, after a close alliance since 1921 which had been the foundation of its advances in labor, again launched a long period of isolation from the labor movement. Despite a series of mass struggles led by the left, the next five years was a period of setbacks for the left wing, ending in almost complete isolation. Socialism had not the strength to advance against the united opposition of the trade union leadership.

In the early 1930s, the Communists began a new approach to the trade union question. Making use of all past experiences, they set out to organize the unorganized into new industrial unions, around a center called the Trade Union Unity League, and at the same time gather their forces in the existing unions. Some 250,000 workers had been gathered in the new unions, when the Roosevelt Administration came to power, and under its protection a general movement for trade union organization swept the nation.

The fact that the Communists were successfully working out a new approach to the labor movement was proved not only by the 250,000 workers they had organized, but even more by the fact that in 1934 the A. F. of L. invited these unions into its ranks. The Communists were able to correctly seize this historical moment, and accepted the invitation. The left wing unions were soon stronger and more stabilized in the A. F. of L., and, soon after, joined forces with the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO) which arose within the A. F. of L., and opened a new and higher stage in American labor history.

The great CIO movement from 1936 to 1945, conquered the mass production industries, won universal collective bargaining rights, and so stimulated the entire labor movement that union membership rose from a paltry three million to more than fifteen million. Within this movement, the Communists won an important place on their merits as trade unionists. For the first time they were able to work with rela-

tive freedom in a great mass movement. By flexible and wise tactics, and untiring work, they were able to seize the initiative for a whole historical period and put their mark upon it; they set the general tone, character and direction for the whole labor movement. By correct tactics they transmitted a socialist spirit and tendency of thought and action to broad sections of the masses, without arousing destructive opposition. They avoided the old false and destructive issues which for generations had wrecked the relations between the Party of Socialism and the trade unions. They gathered more and more allies around themselves, and drew them ever closer. Their most virulent enemies were deprived of any issues that could be developed effectively against the left wing. The old chronic bone of contention - - party leadership verses union leadership - - disappeared from the scene except for some local and minor manifestations. Yet this was precisely the moment when the Communist Party was playing its most effective role in the leadership of the general labor movement, when it was "intervening" most profoundly and energetically in the leadership of the entire workingclass.

In 1945, a new and drastic change began in the relations of the Party to the labor movement and to particular unions. The powerful left wing built up over the years under Communist leadership began to disintegrate. It lost position after position, and went from one defeat to another. By 1948 many of its strongholds are gone, it is more and more isolated, and its remaining forces have lost initiative and confidence.

In the detailed setting forth of the happenings in selected unions and industries, contained in previous chapters, enough has been recorded to reveal the most general cause of this decline of the left wing and isolation of the Party. This cause lies in a relapse into De Leonism, a false relation of the Party to the labor movement, the attempt to impose by authority from above a leading role which can be exercised in the American labor movement only by constantly renewing its mandate from below, from the membership, and not by the simple claim of authority.

This general characterization of the basic cause for the decline of the left wing, for the renewed isolation of So-

cialism from the labor movement, must be further analyzed in its separate parts and manifestations. This deeper probing is the aim of the next chapter.

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VIII.

WHY THE LEFT WING DECLINES INSTEAD OF GROWING.

Why is it that the left wing of the American labor movement, after 15 years steady growth, rising from a small sect to a great mass movement which put its stamp upon a whole period, should, from 1945 to 1948, enter upon an accelerating decline which threatens it with almost complete isolation?

The Communist Party has held its 14th National Convention without giving a direct answer to this question. Indeed, it did not even pose the question with any clarity. Its answer to the inescapable problems of particular defeats and setbacks consisted in the formula "objective difficulties", with its variations - - "results of the imperialist offensive", and "betrayal by misleaders, agents of Wall Street within the ranks of labor."

These answers are false, they beg the question. Their falsity gives the clue that leads to the correct answer. This is, that the left wing has fallen into confusion as the result of mistakes and weaknesses of its most decisive leaders, the Communists.

The left wing grew strong in meeting and overcoming "objective" difficulties much worse than those of the present; why, then, should such difficulties explain its present decline? The left wing grew strong precisely in meeting and defeating attacks by the class enemy, capitalist imperialism; why, then, should it weaken under the present attacks? The left wing grew strong by winning the masses to resist and reject "misleaders" in their ranks; why, then, should it grow weak merely because misleaders continue to appear?

The truth is, of course, that objective difficulties, strong enemy attacks, and the failure of old leadership properly to meet them, are exactly those conditions under which the left wing should grow and prosper - - if the left wing is correctly and wisely led. If, under such conditions, the left wing goes from defeat to defeat, if it loses its positions and the support of the masses, that is irrefutable proof that the left wing is suffering from an unsound and unwise leadership.

What does it mean when the left wing leadership explains its defeat by citing "the offensive of the enemy"? It means, simply, that such a leadership has no plans or expectations of defeating the enemy except in the unlikely event that the enemy stops fighting, collapses, and hands over the victory on a silver platter. But what kind of a leadership is it that expects victory as a gift from the enemy? No battles were ever won by such a leadership.

Enemy attacks, objective difficulties, and misleaders doing their work - - these facts are always present, both in the period of rise of the left wing and in the period of its decline. They cannot, therefore, serve as an explanation of either the rise or the decline. That is why the "resolution" which deals with the problems of the American workingclass merely by a long and wordy detailed description of the enemy attacks, and a shrill defiance against them, is not worthy of the name "resolution" since it resolves nothing.

Neither is there any explanation or resolution of the problem in showing the "new strength" which American imperialism gained in the War, and its sharpened appetite for domination at home and abroad as a result of this new strength. This factor may properly be noted as a limited and partial explanation of the shift in the general relation of forces between capital and labor in a sense unfavorable to labor, but it contributes nothing to explain the decline of left wing support in the workingclass itself, where the opposite trend must be expected and demanded. The left wing grew strong under conditions less favorable to labor than exist today; it continued to grow stronger when conditions were more favorable to labor during the war. Thus, if the left wing prospered under conditions both more and less favorable

than the present, this factor cannot explain, in whole or in part, the present decline of the left wing.

Even less acceptable as a "resolution" of the problem, is the over-simplified (and therefore false) explanation that a large part of Labor's leadership, formerly loyal, has now "betrayed" and "gone over to the enemy". In relation to the left wing, this "explanation" obviously can refer only to the "center" group of the CIO headed by Phil Murray, formerly in alliance with the left wing, but now in alliance with the right wing against the left.

If we should accept such an explanation of the decline of the left wing, what it means when stated in blunt and simple words, that any worker can understand, is that the left wing grows when Murray smiles upon it and declines under Murray's frowns. But exactly the opposite is the correct formulation to describe the role of Murray, namely, that Murray smiles upon the left wing when it grows strong and frowns upon it when it begins to weaken, when it loses its mass support among the membership. Murray's course is the effect, not the cause, of the decline of the left wing.

The causes for the decline of the left wing in the American labor movement must be sought in the defects, weaknesses and mistakes of the left wing leadership.

The left wing failed to meet the problems of the post-war world with such policies and practical leadership which could win the confidence and support of the mass membership. That, stated honestly and without evasion, is the unpleasant and difficult heart of the problem under examination. Refusal to face this fact will condemn the left wing to continued decline. The left wing has not been weakened by the attacks of hostile forces outside itself; it has been weakened by its own course of action.

The decline of the left wing was the result of many confused and often contradictory steps. Out of the confusion and contradictions, however, a general character of the weaknesses and mistakes can be traced.

Firstly, the steps that took the left wing leadership away from the masses were unplanned, they were often the opposite to declared intentions, they were a surrender to the spontaneous development of events. This means that the left wing was not leading, it was being dragged at the tail of forces outside its control.

For example: In the UAW the left wing proclaimed in words its intention to better organize its own forces (shop groups), but in deeds it merged its own forces into the Addes caucus, submitting itself unconditionally to the Addes policy, precisely at the crucial moment of the union elections. It abdicated its own established leading role. It proclaimed an unlimitedly militant strike policy in such a manner as to hand the strike movement over to Reuther, who manipulated it against the left wing. It demonstrated its own unprincipled attitude by denouncing Reuther's strike settlement as treasonable, while defending the same identical settlement when it was made by the UE left wing leadership. The left wing thus stood before the masses more and more as a faction fighting for power, and less and less as a leading group fighting for policy and principle.

The left wing lost power in the UAW because it lost the confidence and support of the membership. It lost the membership because it showed itself more interested in power than in policy and principle. It lost the membership because it submerged its own true role, that of leadership, in favor of an alien role, that of a simple power-faction. The left wing lost because it made itself a tail of other forces, surrendered to the spontaneous development of an unprincipled struggle for power in the Union. It lost power because it made power its first and main aim, at the expense of principle.

These general characteristics of the defeat of the left wing in the UAW will be found to apply, with different circumstances and details, to other union situations examined in this study.

Secondly, the left wing displayed a widening gap between its words and its deeds, between its theory and its practice. The authority of left wing leadership was built

upon its reputation for strict correspondence between word and deed, to which the masses are very sensitive. The growing gap between theory and practice has undermined the mass support of the left wing.

In trade union matters this was most glaringly expressed in demanding from Murray and the centrist leaders of the CIO an uncompromising militant strike policy which the left wing did not itself apply in the most important unions under its leadership. It was exemplified in denunciation of centrist and right wing leaders for strike settlements, at the same moment the left wing was making identical settlements itself. It carried its militant strike policy into action only in the weaker unions (communications, packing-houses, office workers) where the strikes were lost, contributing to further doubts of the soundness of left wing policy. Thus the left wing put itself in the position of keeping two sets of books, gaining the advantages of neither a consistently militant strike policy, nor of a cautious and careful strike policy.

In general political questions, the gap between words and deeds was most strikingly shown in loud words which rejected in principle all cooperation with the capitalists, while in action the left wing merged itself in the new party movement, which is expressly and emphatically pro-capitalist and anti-socialist and boasts of having the only candidate in the field who is personally a successful practicing capitalist and a millionaire.

Thirdly, the left wing made a series of compromises and surrenders in matters of principle, which seriously undermined its moral position and consequently its authority. These breaches of principle were quite uncalled for and unwise, if the left wing had intended to honor its agreements; they became doubly damaging when the left wing defended them as "mere manoeuvres" which it had no intention to carry out in practice.

The worst examples of such unprincipled compromises were; giving a unanimous vote in support of the anti-communist resolution adopted in the CIO National Convention

in 1946, which "resented and rejected" activity of the Communist Party on trade union matters; the unanimous vote in support of the resolution in the CIO New York State Convention in 1947, which condemned the USSR's use of the veto in the United Nations; and the unanimous vote given the resolution in the CIO National Convention in 1947 approving the Marshall Plan.

In voting for these resolutions the left wing defended its acts as "necessary to maintain unity". They were not necessary, nor did they contribute anything to unity. These acts damaged the moral position of the left wing and confused its followers, while inciting the right wing to further extremes. Since the left wing did not intend to honor the resolutions for which it voted, and said so openly in defending its votes, it thereby put under suspicion all its agreements. The left wing admitted that its "agreement" with the right wing was "necessary to unity", and thereby accepted the onus of violating unity when it disagreed; whereas the only correct position under such circumstances is to maintain the "right to disagree" and to express that disagreement as precisely the way to maintain unity. The act of voting for resolutions which were quickly repudiated by the left wing, was equally damaging to left influence and to labor unity.

Fourthly, the left wing arbitrarily split with some of its closest allies in a series of unions. It did this from the same motive that in other unions caused it to merge with more distant allies, namely, an unprincipled grabbing for power. This was outstandingly the case in the NMU.

Such splits were not the result of following a policy of breaking relations with less reliable allies while merging with more reliable ones; on the contrary, in the NMU it was the left wing itself that split (including a split in the Communist group), while in the UAW the left merged with the center group, which was far to the right of the entire NMU on all issues.

Splits with close allies usually resulted in driv-

ing them into the arms of the center and even the right wing, as the only means of existence against the left wing assault. In each case the splits were without any planned aim, were unnecessary and unprincipled; they were justified only by pointing out that after the split the former allies moved to the right. They were based on the theory that these allies had no hold on the rank-and-file membership except that given to them by their alliance with the left wing; but such a theory was proven false when the membership turned in great majority to the former allies and rejected the left wing itself.

These splits with the closest allies resulted from demanding from them an unquestioning obedience to decisions taken outside the Union councils. Such a demand is self-defeating, even when applied by the Party to its own members, but it is doubly disastrous when the attempt is made to apply it to non-party allies.

Fifthly, the left wing leadership has abandoned the methods of persuasion and conviction, as the main instrument of leadership, and substituted the method of command, of semi-military authority. This method was established within the Party in 1945, and then carried over into the work in the trade union left wing. Consultations with the left wing forces and its allies were reduced to meetings in which "instructions" were handed down, to be obeyed without question. The motto of the military commander, "Their's not to reason why; their's but to do and die", became the rule not only for the rank and file followers, but for the leading cadres of great national unions. No choice was left them but that between submission or split. It was not always the worst elements who rebelled and threw off this semi-military discipline. And those who submitted to it, found themselves more and more cut off from the masses, who resented it.

The task of winning the trade unions to the Wallace-for-President movement was made infinitely more difficult by precisely this authoritarian drill-sergeant method of leadership.

It is one of history's little ironies that the wrecking of the great and powerful left wing of the American labor movement has been carried out under the flag of a revival of the pure teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, as a fight against "revisionism". The resulting relapse into the isolation of socialism from the mass labor movement, against which Marx and his pupils never failed to protest, is sufficient proof of how little Marxism-Leninism there is in it.

Again the central task for America is, to restore Marxism as a guide to action for the workingclass, and not a dogma for the delectation of faithful sects. The American workingclass is ripe for the acceptance of Marxist leadership; it is not constitutionally hostile to Socialism or to socialist theory. But a Marxism clothed in the uniform of arbitrary authority, or in the guise of a rigid dogma administered by a select priesthood, has been and will continue to be rejected by the American workingclass. The Marxism the American workers will accept is the creative Marxism exemplified by Marx himself, and by his pupils, who won the masses by persuasion and conviction before they attempted to exercise authority in their name.

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