

The Party Among National Groups

By F. BROWN

IT WOULD be wrong to believe that we are going backward in our work among the national groups. I think we are moving forward. The trouble is that we are not keeping pace with the big developments in the labor movement. While we were moving forward, while we were building a series of united front movements around various issues that in certain national groups took the

character of small People's Front movements, we did not stabilize our forces sufficiently; we did not utilize this movement to build our Party among these masses and to move these masses a step forward. Which means that at this plenum we are confronted with the problem of how to extend the People's Front among the national groups. If we want to achieve this aim, we have to take into consideration a few questions.

Is the Americanization process going on in this country? Yes, it is. It is an Americanization process which, while growing out of economic and social conditions, is at the same time forced from above by the ruling class. The ruling class would like to speed this process to such an extent as to get rid of the problem that the foreign-born masses still represent in this country.

But, besides this type of Americanization process, there is another going on, a healthy one, which I would call the "proletarian Americanization process, the Americanization process that develops with the development of the American labor movement.

The fact that millions of workers are streaming into the C.I.O., foreign-born and Americans, foreign-born of all kinds of nationalities, and that these thousands are fighting shoulder to shoulder for democracy, for better economic conditions, shows that we are confronted with an Americanization process and a healthy process. At the same time that such a process is going on, however, something else is happening in this country. Here you will find a very interesting contradiction that we must take into consideration. While the foreign-born masses today are moving in the United States and are fighting not only for industrial unionism, but at the same time are fighting for democracy, these same masses, or part of these masses, are supporting reactionary forces bound up with reaction in their home country.

This means that while we have this healthy Americanization process going on, at the same time we find that the European events have a great repercussion among the foreign-born masses in this country. This sometimes

even takes the character of building national consciousness. So much so that Comrade Browder was absolutely correct when he said that you will find Italians or Germans of the second generation stating that they are proud to be Americans, but at the same time, are proud to be Germans, Italians, etc. These things developed in the last two years under our own nose. The masses that feel discriminated against fall prey to fascist demagoguery: that their prestige will rise with the prestige of their country of origin.

Who took advantage of such a situation? Here we must confess that we did not take full advantage, but that the reactionaries, the Liberty League and Hearst, working together with the agents of the fascist countries, took the advantage, not only mobilizing the old generation, but even raising a national consciousness in the second generation of this country.

A Weapon to Defeat the Fascists

Did the Party give us a weapon, some instrument to defeat the maneuvers of the fascists? Yes, the Party forged a weapon two or three years ago, when the Party took a correct Leninist line in regard to the revolutionary traditions in this country. The moment that the Party developed this correct Leninist line it was necessary, it was logical, that we should have developed the same line among the national groups; but we didn't, we continued along the same sectarian line, and by continuing along this sectarian line we remained separated from the foreign-born masses.

It is true that we succeeded here and there to break through by developing the campaign for social insurance. This gave us a splendid basis to build a broad united front movement, but later on we remained hanging in the air. We were waiting for some other issues around which we would be able to unite these masses. Today we have all kinds of issues around which we can unite these masses and build all these People's Front movements from among the national groups. This, in the final analysis, will build

not only a broad united front movement among the foreign-born masses of this country, but will become part and parcel of the broad People's Front movement of the country.

How can we mobilize the foreign-born masses in the trade union drives? We have to find out the demands that we can raise among these national groups for the purpose of uniting them, for the purpose of preparing the ground to bring more of these groups into the broad People's Front movement. Is it not a fact that the foreign-born as a whole are discriminated against? It is a fact. Then why should we not raise certain demands around which we can mobilize these masses? Not only these masses, but these masses with the support of the labor movement of this country. We will have to do it.

The central question is the C.I.O. movement. It is to the extent that the foreign-born masses are entering the C.I.O., and the work we do among these masses, that we will carry on the healthy Americanization process of which I spoke before, utilizing all the national traditions of these groups.

Utilizing Revolutionary Traditions

A Polish worker, for example, will become a good fighter for industrial unionism, for democracy, if we will not only utilize the revolutionary traditions of the American labor movement, but even the revolutionary traditions of Poland. They will then be proud alike of the American and Polish revolutionary traditions. And by doing this not only will we bring them into the trade union movement, but we will check the advance of the fascists here.

There are tremendous possibilities before us, but the one problem we have to solve today if we want to develop the movement of which I am speaking is the problem of forces, of strengthening the bureaus. One thing is positive—we are not recruiting sufficiently; we are not developing new forces. The work of the language bureaus is restricted to a few people. We must get away from this

and we can; otherwise it will be impossible to do the tremendous work that is before us. *This means that the question of recruiting must be on the order of the day.*

Another question which must be discussed is the relation of the language bureaus to the district committees. If we want the language bureaus to do good work, put their shoulders to the wheel, they must feel that the whole Party is behind them, that their work is considered and appreciated, that the work of winning influence over millions is not an insignificant task. I believe if we will try to establish in our largest districts commissions for work among national groups, and in the small districts have at least one of the leading comrades in charge, we will achieve a great deal.