

# Education and the Need of a System

By MANUEL GOMEZ.

WE are still paying for the sins of the past. They continue to be potent forces leading us astray, and their effect is felt not only in the persistence of certain elements of socialist ideology, but in the very revolt from that ideology. The socialist party was a party of propaganda. We pride ourselves on being a party of action, knowing that only in the full tide of the struggle can the workers learn the lessons of the struggle, and that only in struggle can they acquire the solidarity, and temper, and will to power, necessary for the overthrow of capitalism.

The members of the Workers Party participate actively in all phases of the class fight, striving to win the leadership of the workers, to deepen their consciousness, to increase their striking power. Thus the party is establishing contact with ever-wider proletarian masses. At the same time it cannot be denied that the spread of the fundamental principles of Communism is not keeping step with the rapid growth of influence of the party. Inside the party itself, the number of comrades who have anything like a real Communist background is surprisingly small. Moreover, our comrades do not feel the need of education. In the swing back from the old socialist concepts, we have been obliged to emphasize action, action action—with the unavoidable result that many of our members, especially the younger ones, are losing all sense of proportion. There is growing up in our ranks a positive scorn for education. This is a form of proletarian snobbery which is likely to cost us dear.

The Propaganda Theses adopted at the Fifth Congress of the Communist International point out that the international conflicts in the C. I. "are at the same time ideological crisis in the respective parties," that viewed fundamentally, "all right and left deviations are due to deviations from the class ideology of the proletariat, from Leninist-Marxism." Evidence to support this is all around us.

When the delegates to the historic Second Congress of the Comintern arrived in Moscow, they were given copies of a new pamphlet, which in the days preceding the congress was to become the topic of feverish and ex-

cited discussion. This was Lenin's work on "The Infantile Sickness of Leftism." Never was anything better timed. The delegates were, for the most part, ardent revolutionary fighters such as John Reed from the United States, "Willie" Gallacher from Great Britain and Bordiga from Italy. They had engaged in bitter struggles against social-democratic opportunism and social patriotism, and had learned to despise everything that smacked of compromise. Many of them did not believe any true revolutionary could ever be "too far to the left."

Lenin's pamphlet showed the direction in which this cult of "leftism" was heading. Penetrating beyond slogans and programs of action, Lenin laid bare, for the first time, the real ideological content of the tendency, showing it to be a deviation in the direction of anarcho-syndicalism.

That was the virus of the malady, "left sickness," which was finding expression in the "Dutch Marxism" of the meteoric Western European Bureau of the International; in the strange phenomenon of an "anti-party" party, in the person of the Communist Labor Party of Germany; in the anti-parliamentarism of the American, English, Spanish and other parties, and in the failure on the part of nearly all the parties to comprehend the need of centralization and discipline, until it was explained again and again.

Just as the controversies of the Second Congress revealed an anarcho-syndicalist ideology, so the recent conflicts in the German and other parties, following the October defeat were traceable to remnants of the old social-democratic ideology, which resulted in deviations to the right.

In our own party, the effects of insufficiently firm Communist ideology have been apparent. First we had a severe dose of leftism, which we were a long time overcoming, and which even today has by no means been entirely eliminated from our system. Some of the more serious consequences were anti-parliamentarism, a distorted trade union policy and a peculiar prejudice against the idea of a "legal" Communist party.

Today, many of the same comrades show evidence of "right sickness." They wish to "go to the masses," with a carefree disregard of the tasks

implied in that slogan. Opportunistic mistakes on the part of these comrades do not mean that they are opportunists. Opportunism in our party springs from exactly opposite sources from those responsible for the inherent opportunism of the professionally opportunist socialist party. However, precisely because we are a party of action, the danger of opportunism for us is especially great. Our mistakes result from entering into struggles, and participating in them without guiding principles, or without a firm grasp of principles, which in the long run amounts to the same thing.

If our party is to become a real "bolshewist" party, in the spirit of the Fifth Congress of the Communist International, it must be solidly rooted in revolutionary theory. This applies particularly to the individual members of the party. The propaganda theses already referred to, lay great stress on the importance of "more deeply hammering Marxism and Leninism into the consciousness of the Communist parties and the party members."

"Only by a real and organized assimilation of Leninist Marxism," continue the theses, "can the parties reduce the possibilities of political, tactical and organizational errors to a minimum and bring about the emancipation of the working class."

Hand in hand with our political and industrial activity among the masses must go the systematic education of our membership. Education must not be divorced from action. At the same time, it must not be exclusively "practical," limiting itself to special phases of trade union work, to interpretation of current problems, to tactical and strategic considerations, etc. To be truly practical, to equip our comrades for Communist work in all situations, there must be education in the fundamentals of Marxism and Leninism. At the present time, there is an alarming number of party members who are insufficiently grounded in Communist theory to talk about it convincingly to their shopmates, let alone answer objections which may be interposed.

Nowadays we are taking applicants into the party with little or no preliminary examination. This policy is a decided step forward from the rigid sectarianism of a few years back; it is the only way in which we can hope

to become a mass party; moreover, we should be no Communist party at all if we were not confident of our ability to make real Communists of the newcomers once they are inside the organization. But the policy, like everything else of value in our struggle, has its dangers. Unless we are careful not to neglect the fundamental education of our new members, they will become familiar with the idea of maneuvering and flexibility in action, without ever comprehending the principles upon which the maneuvers are based. The character of our party will undergo a subtle but inevitable change, and we shall soon find that we are not a Communist party at all. Participation in Communist activity will do more than any amount of conscious study to make Communists out of the new members, but study is nevertheless indispensable.

All education is, to a very great extent, self-education. Without the enlightened co-operation of the membership, the most satisfactory educational program will fail. And large numbers of our members are still so completely dominated by the swing back from socialist party ideology, so carried away by the idea of "action," that they are wont to consider any meeting at all that has to do with immediate, "practical," work, more important than any study class. A vague sentiment prevails, that such education as is needed will be acquired haphazard, absorbed in some way or other in the natural course of things. Where this state of mind leads to disregard of systematic study it must be vigorously combated.

Comrade Browder recently raised the slogan in our ranks: "Make it a party of Leninism!" Leninism is applied Marxism, or rather Marxism applied to the period of monopoly and imperialism. It is a doctrine of class struggle, with its own tactics and its own fundamental strategy. A Leninist party must be a revolutionary party, which means that it must be a party of action. But action without theory becomes sporadic, confused, contradictory, and leads inevitably into "left sickness" and the swamp of opportunism.

Let us remember the significant words of Lenin: "Without a revolutionary theory, a revolutionary movement is impossible!"