

A LETTER TO THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The following excerpts are part of a longer letter sent by Heinrich Brandler and Jay Lovestone in the name of the November Conference of the International Communist Opposition to the Executive Committee of the Communist International. No reply has been received to this document sent on November 9, 1935.

The complete letter will be published in the "INTERNATIONAL CLASS STRUGGLE" (English Edition) for January-March 1936. This is the official quarterly of the International Communist Opposition and will appear in printed form about the middle of January.—Editor.

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THE UNITED FRONT AND ITS LIMITS

As to the united front, the resolution correctly states that the united front movement "is still in its infancy". It goes on to say that, to date, in France "the first advances of fascism have been defeated." This takes the ground from under the illusion that "the road to French fascism has been closed." The resolution lacks an adequate concrete analysis of the very serious shortcomings and errors of the French united front movement. This analysis is all the more necessary since the French exper-

ience has been put up as the international model at the Congress.

The resolution states that the united front "is the most important immediate task of the international labor movement in the present historical epoch." We welcome the strong emphasis on the necessity of turning to the reformist organizations. This is especially urgent in view of six years of ultra-leftism and the "united front from below." But the resolution lacks a simultaneous emphasis of the limits and the objective of the united front movement. The Seventh Congress gives directives not only for

the next few months but for a longer period. Therefore, the resolution should have stated expressly and unequivocally that the winning of political power by the working class is not possible thru the united front movement. The seizure of political power presupposes that the Communist party is already the leader of the majority of the working class, i.e., the leader of the working class for an armed uprising, a civil war, and not only for partial and immediate demands as in the united front struggle. To be silent on this, for fear of repelling a temporary ally, will lead to opportunist deviations and to a possible collapse of the strong united front movement. The failure to uncover the limits of the united front movement weakens the correct appeal of the resolutions "not to give up independent work of Communist education, organization, and mobilization of the masses." A true united front movement is not weakened but strengthened thru a clarification of its limits.

United front tactics can only serve as the means for ushering in the struggle for the seizure of power. The united front movement is indispensable for this purpose. To grasp clearly the limits of the united front movement is the prerequisite for the proper organization, as demanded in the resolution. "Of elected (or in the countries under fascist dictatorship selected from the most authoritative participants in the movement) non-partisan class organs of the united front in the factories, among the unemployed, in the workers' districts, among the small townsfolk and in the villages." Only when these non-partisan broad class organs of the united front are conceived of as the preliminary stages of the future political soviets can the united front movement build the organs for an extra-parliamentary struggle for partial de-

mands. Without these organs, serious successful partial struggles are impossible. The experiences had in these broad non-partisan united front organs during the struggle for partial demands from the starting point for the transformation of these organs for partial demands into political councils (soviets)—into organs for the struggle for political power.

THE UNITED FRONT vs. PEOPLE'S FRONT GOVERNMENT

Such an error of omission is particularly evident in the resolution in the paragraph on the united front or People's Front Government.

"If with such an upsurge of the mass movement it will prove possible and necessary in the interests of the proletariat to create a proletarian united front government or an anti-fascist People's Front government, which is not yet a government of the proletarian dictatorship, but one which undertakes to put

into effect decisive measures against fascism and reaction, the Communist party must see to it that such a government is formed."

It is conceivable that in the course of a mighty united front movement based on strong non-partisan united front organs the question of the government is put before it—before the Communists have a majority in the non-partisan class organs of the united front. Under such circumstances the attitude of the Communists toward the formation of a government is decisive for the winning over for communism of the masses organized in the united front movement. A situation may arise when such an experiment is necessary in order to eliminate the very last democratic illusions of the workers. In this sense, Lenin proposed to the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries in September 1917 to dissolve the coalition with the bourgeois parties, especially with the Cadets, and to take

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Strengthen Courage of German Communists; Swell \$5,000 Fund

By Jay Lovestone

Dear Comrades and Friends:

Our appeal last week was not in vain. Some of you answered right away and right well. We are encouraged.

But good beginnings don't necessarily insure a fine finish. We have a long road to hoe. Every day, every hour reveals the burning urgency of our task. To show that we are not crying "wolf", we talk to you straight from the heart. We hope you will answer straight from the shoulder.

ly. All comrades were accused and convicted of underground work on behalf of the CPG-O.

"It is rather significant that the German press designed for abroad did not publish a single word about these trials. It is, therefore, all the more necessary for the workers of other countries to come to the aid of their brothers in Hitler Germany and to register their protest against Hitler savagery."

Now, what is your answer? How soon

New York Militant Socialists Set Up New State Organization

The New York members, in revolt against the Old Guard, met on December 28, 29 to constitute themselves as the official state party and to lay plans for organization. The credentials committee reported 93 delegates from various cities thruout New York State. New York City had a representation of 41 official delegates while about 8 delegates from upstate locals were there merely as observers. The up-state delegations were markedly different in their composition being proletarian and unemployed, and in their attitudes mostly antagonistic to

and steady disintegration. A notable exception was the speech of Brickner (Buffalo) which bristled with invective and revolutionary indignation against the Old Guard.

The convention went on to elect its resolutions and organization committee. The delegates accepted the two (!!) resolutions presented by the former committee. One resolution endorsed the Socialist Call and the other declared that "we assume the responsibility of an emergency of the S.P. of New York and proceed to elect a representative State

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over the government. Under the condition that this government would grant the Bolsheviks full freedom of action, Lenin was ready to support it. This was correct because the preparations for the struggle for power, the ultimate aims of the Communists, were facilitated. In the same sense, the CPG (Spartacus League) proposed to the trade unions, the Social Democratic party, and the Independent Social Democratic party of Germany to take over the government and pledged to support it on the same conditions during the Kapp putsch in 1920. This policy was approved in principle by Lenin. During the united front actions in 1922-23 the CPG supported Social Democratic governments in Saxony and Thuringia on the basis of their acceptance of a program of partial demands which guaranteed the CPG freedom of activity and presupposed the break of the Social Democracy with the bourgeoisie. The CPG had as a base of support in the execution of this policy broad, extra-parliamentary mass organs (factory councils, proletarian centurions and committees for control of supplies and prices). This policy was essentially correct despite some errors in its application which must be avoided in the future. The slogan of "a government of the anti-Fascist People's Front", however, dangerously blurs the class character of such a government because it provides for the possibility of participation by the bourgeoisie in such a government. This we reject.

We likewise reject all entrance of Communists into a so-called united front government. The resolution speaks of the possibility of the entrance of Communists into such a united front government and leaves it to the Communist parties to decide on the basis of the concrete situation, whether they will or will not enter. The resolution defines the pre-requisites for the formation of a united front government as a situation in which: (a) the bourgeois state apparatus is paralyzed so that the bourgeoisie cannot prevent the formation of such a government; (b) in which the broadest masses of the workers strongly oppose fascism and reaction but are not yet ready to take up the struggle for Soviet power."

The 1923 experience in Germany teaches us definitely that "when the masses are strongly opposed to fascism and reaction but are not yet ready to take up the struggle for Soviet power," every united front government or even People's Front government will be swept away by fascism and reaction, because the workers not yet being ready to wage the struggle for Soviets affords the bourgeoisie the possibility of strengthening their shattered rule. Thus, such a government will inevitably lead to a "banal parliamentary comedy" which will make the masses lose faith in the CP and give the bourgeoisie a new breathing spell.

To send Communists into such a government is to break the backbone of the united front movement. The conduct of the Communist members of such a government is not determined by the good will or ill will of these Communists but exclusively by the extra-parliamentary fighting power of the masses organized in the united front. The entrance of the CPG into the Saxon and Thuringian governments in 1923 came despite the objections of the then leadership of the Party and on the basis of the decision of the ECCI. The Saxon experiment failed, tho the CPG could count on the backing of broad extra-parliamentary class organs with whose help, before the entry into the government, the Party was able to lead important mass struggles. The present proposed participation of Communists in a united front or People's Front government must all the more lead to failure; for example, in France, where the CP is, as a result of its opportunist errors, neglecting the organization of extra-parliamentary struggles and united front organs. The attitude towards the question of a government is not merely a question of the possible future. The correctness of united front policy depends upon the correct or false position on the united front or People's Front government is completely out of the question and harmful. Such slogans can have only the following effects: 1. The development of the Social Democratic workers will be hindered and thrown back. 2. It will make it easier for the Social Democracy to take up its coalition policy with the bourgeois parties or groups and this time it will be with approval of the Communists. 3. It will enable the Social Democracy to make another counter-revolutionary attempt at saving capitalist class rule on a bourgeois democratic basis when fascism is overthrown. 4. It will weaken, nay, even disarm, the Communists in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, in the preparation of the armed uprising and against all reformist tendencies.

The resolution further suffers from a dangerous omission and unclarity in the section on the attitude of Communists towards bourgeois democracy. The incorrect statements by Dimitroff in his speech which were to the effect that it is no longer the choice between bourgeois democracy and proletarian dictatorship and that the Communists in such a situation must defend bourgeois democracy is not repeated in the resolution. The resolutions says:

"In the struggle to defend against fascism the bourgeois democratic liberties and the gains of the toilers, in the struggle to overthrow fascist dictatorship, the revolutionary proletariat prepares its forces, strengthens its fight in contacts with its allies and directs the struggle towards the goal of achieving real democracy of the toilers—Soviet power."

This formulation is not incorrect, but in the face of the confusion which has been created as to the relation of com-

munist to bourgeois democracy it is inadequate.

It is necessary to say that Communists do not defend bourgeois democracy as such, not even when they are defending the democratic rights of workers against the attacks of fascists and other reactionaries. Even in the struggle against fascism within the bourgeois state no heed must be paid to the democratic rules as far as the fascists are concerned. The democratic rights of the workers can be defended in the long run and thoroly only thru the revolutionary liquidation of bourgeois democracy which is the bearer of the germs of fascism. We fight against the limitation of the democratic rights of the workers. We fight for the denial of democratic rights to the fascists.

We fully approve section 3 of the resolution on the unity of the trade union movement. "The Communists are decidedly for the re-establishment of trade union unity in each country and on an international scale . . . In countries where there are small Red trade unions efforts must be made to secure their admission into the big reformist trade unions . . . It is the duty of Communists to work actively in the reformist and united trade unions, to consolidate them and recruit the unorganized workers for them." We agree with the provisions for the trade union work. This is no lip service on our part, because the ICO has always and everywhere worked along these lines. The fact that the resolution ignores Communist fraction work is to be regretted; but it is probably the necessary price presently for the elimination of the ultra-leftist past.

The second paragraph in section IV of the resolution on the tasks of Communists in the individual fields of the anti-fascists movement is wrong:

"Communists must enter all Fascist mass organizations which have a monopoly of legal existence in the given country."

This formulation is entirely inadequate and improper. The necessity of Communist work in the fascist mass organizations is undisputed. The shortcoming of the resolution consists in the fact that it does not analyze concretely the peculiarities of this type of work which can only be disruptive. The CPG-O has done so and has, therefore, done practical work and attained successes which the numerically stronger CPG has not achieved. The formulation of the resolution which pledges all communists to belong to all fascist mass organizations makes it harder for the CP to select the appropriate forces for disruptive work in the fascist leagues. Thus it also fails to see one of the most important possibilities of destroying the fascist organizations—namely, mass resignations. It nourishes the illusion that it is possible to work in fascist organizations with a view of winning them over as organizations instead of organizing their destruction.