

Mass Defense Is the Only Answer to Terror

By J. PETERS

THE Thesis of the thirteenth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International emphasizes that in the fight against fascism we have to brush aside two tendencies in the Communist Party: (1), the fatalist defeatist line of the inevitability of fascism and imperialist war, and (2), opportunist underestimation of the tempo of fascization and the threat of imperialist war. These opportunist tendencies result in a failure to fight against fascism and war. These tendencies condemn the Communist Party to passivity.

The bourgeoisie of the United States rapidly prepares its apparatus to be ready for the rapidly approaching war and against the revolutionized toiling masses. They no longer attempt to keep up the mask of sham democracy. The rising masses must be terrorized today, otherwise the hinterland can-

not be relied upon tomorrow, when war breaks out. The most vicious attack in every little economic struggle is launched against the workers in order to create a feeling of helplessness when facing the exploiters.

The bloody terror in Ambridge, in New Mexico, in Greensburg, in the strike waves of last year, and the ruthless, terroristic suppression of the strikes in the South; the utilization of the armed forces of the government, National Guard, and the "democratic" cover of fascist forces by deputized business men and rich farmers in Minneapolis and Toledo; the coming to the forefront of the extra legal fascist forces—Ku Klux Klan, White Legion, Vigilantes—in the mine and steel workers' strike in the South, the agricultural strike, and the longshoremen's strike on the West Coast; the brutal provocation of the police in New York, Chicago, Detroit, etc.; the lynch terror against the Negroes and the bombing of houses by agent provocateurs in the South show very clearly what method the bourgeoisie will use against the rising masses.

It is no accident that the American Federation of Labor furnished the government with a special exposure of the Communist Party and the revolutionary unions. It is no accident that Senator Copeland introduced a bill providing for a federal police department (Scotland Yard). It is no accident that Congress appropriated money for the Department of Justice for strengthening the forces of the federal police under the pretext of fighting kidnapers. Nobody will be fooled with believing that armored cars will be used against Dillinger—these are ready for the suppression of the struggles of the fighting masses. It is no accident that 75,000 rifles were given to patriotic organizations for "target practice." The Government very openly arms the fascist organizations against the toiling masses. It is no accident that the Dickstein Committee, which originally was established to investigate Nazi activities, spends most of the appropriated money to gather material on the activities of the Communist Party. It is no accident that Moley, former head of the "brain trust," started a campaign against our Party, calling the Communists gangsters.

Fascist organizations are springing up all over the country. The Nazis in New York already have 14,000 readers of their papers. The Storm Troopers brazenly parade in Yorkville, terrorizing the population. The American fascist organizations are gaining a foothold, especially in the West (Silver Shirts), and growing rapidly in many other states, as in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, etc. There is a special organization of the officers of the army launched on the basis of the Hitler program.

Build Workers' Self-Defense Groups

The fight against terror in the present situation is one of the most important and burning problems facing the Communist Party. It is necessary to develop the broadest possible mass agitation against fascism and to popularize our stand in this respect. But at the same time it is of vital necessity to start energetically building self-defense organizations in all workers' organizations, in the factories, and around the Communist Party. The emphasis on building the defense organizations must be laid on their mass character, on the united front of all workers in the shops or unions or other mass organizations. We have to guard against the tendency of building some secret defense organizations which are nothing but hot-beds of provocation. The experiences in the Red Front, Red Shirt, etc., were a lesson in this respect. The self-defense organizations must be the united front of the workers in the respective shop, organization or territory, openly propagating the necessity of organized resistance of the masses against the terror of the bourgeoisie.

The A. F. of L. bureaucrats and racketeers have no scruples in hiring gangsters to attack the militant rank-and-file members of the locals. Three or four gunmen, as our experience shows, can terrorize a local of three to four hundred and beat up the leaders of the rank and file without any organizational resistance by the members in the local, in spite of the fact that these members are against the bureaucracy, against the racketeers. What splendid opportunity exists in the locals of the A. F. of L. to organize defense groups, agitating among the masses to come to every meeting of the organization ready to defend themselves. The Minneapolis and Toledo workers succeeded in fighting back against forces of the bourgeoisie. What could organized mass defense groups do in a local with these gangsters, if they were prepared to receive them?

Build United Front of Workers For Self Defense

In fighting against the lynch terror, we have to organize a broad united front of Negro and white workers for self defense.

The fight against terror is not an abstract slogan. When we fight for free speech, for free assembly, for the right to organize, for the right to strike, we face in every move the terror of the bourgeoisie. In fighting the terror we can build up a mighty united front of the workers who are involved in these struggles. The heroic struggles of the workers in Minneapolis and Toledo prove that this united front can be established without any difficulties. On the picket lines of Minneapolis and Toledo the striking workers wel-

comed the fighting members of the Unemployment Councils and the Communist Party. The united front was built and steered in the fight against terror without any special conference. The general strike sentiment in Minneapolis and Toledo was a result of the mass reaction of the workers against terror. The vote for solidarity strikes was a highly political act of the workers in this situation. The Toledo experience proves that even when the Communist Party, because of the weaknesses of its work in the A. F. of L., was not entrenched in the locals, the Party can influence and give leadership to the workers with mass agitation and propaganda from outside. The slogan of the general strike in Toledo, for example, was issued by the Communist Party and picked up by the rank and file of the locals with a very large majority of these locals voting for it. Only with painful maneuvers did the A. F. of L. bureaucrats and the bourgeoisie succeed in keeping the workers from striking.

Mobilization of Masses Will Defeat Terror

It is possible to break through the terror of the bourgeoisie with the correct policy and proper mobilization of the masses. The Dearborn experience shows that it is possible. Dearborn, the Ford town where we could not open our mouths, where we could not distribute the Daily Worker or a leaflet, where if three workers were talking together on the sidewalks the police dispersed them, the Party through proper activity, building the united front of the workers, succeeded in breaking through the terror and today the Party is a legal organization there.

In New Mexico we have the same situation. Here the Communist Party was absolutely illegal. In the mining town of Gallup we did not have one Communist Party member before the strike. Our organizers sent down to this town had to work absolutely illegally. We started to prepare the struggles. With proper work we succeeded in mobilizing the workers to such an extent that with the exception of the Chamber of Commerce, the whole town was behind the union and the Communist Party when the strike broke out. The troops of the National Guard could not terrorize the workers. The fifteen hundred miners in this town stood up like one behind their leaders, behind the union and the Communist Party.

There was a situation in Gallup when all the leaders who were developed through the struggle were jailed. But the strike continued with new leaders. The same day that 26 leaders were arrested, a Y.C.L. member took over the leadership. A 13-year old girl, a Pioneer, got the address of the Central Committee from the Daily Worker and sent us a

wire reporting the situation and the arrests. The Pioneers on their own initiative organized a school strike for the support of their parents, to demand the release of the jailed leaders.

Here the bourgeoisie did not succeed in scaring the workers with the bogey of the Reds because the Communist Party was brought forward from the first moment and the workers saw how Communists really fight with them for their interests. The workers saw the Communists in action—saw that they were of their own flesh and blood. The strike was settled only after the demand for the release of all the arrested leaders was granted and the leaders were set free. As a result of this splendid work of the Communist Party more than one hundred miners joined the Party in the small town of five thousand population.

In this period, the political firmness of the Party, the proper application of Bolshevik tactics, the quick utilization of the contradictions in the camp of the bourgeoisie are essential conditions for the effective mobilization of the masses. The bourgeoisie strives to liquidate the influence of our Party among the masses by raising the "Red scare" in all the militant struggles of the toiling masses. The present wave of terror is only a beginning of bloody suppression against the struggles of the workers. This terror and provocation will be increased day by day as the conditions of the workers grow worse, as we come nearer to the imperialist war. The police commissioner of New York issued a statement warning all policemen that they will be brought up on charges if they do not attack mercilessly every demonstration of the unemployed or strikes of the proletariat.

Communist Party Must Take Lead

The Communist Party must be in the forefront in mobilizing the masses against terror. The District and Section Committees, as well as the Party fractions in the various mass organizations, must realize that only with mass agitation and organized self-defense groups can we fight back the attacks of the armed forces of the bourgeoisie, whether they are legal or extra-legal. In the control tasks of the Party organizations and fractions, the building of the self-defense groups must be one of the most important points. Reliable, responsible comrades should be assigned in each fraction and Party organization to start to build this organization.

We repeat again, the self-defense organizations must have a mass character. They cannot be illegal, secret, narrow organizations. They must be a united front of all workers irrespective of their political or union affiliation. The issue is, shall we wait with folded arms until the bosses kill us

or shall we be prepared to defend our lives and the lives of our wives and children?

The work in the National Guard must be intensified to the greatest extent. The opportunistic, subjectively social-democratic conception regarding work in the armed forces must be rooted out from our ranks. The role that the National Guard played in Toledo and in almost every strike struggle of the workers in the past period must make every Party member conscious of the necessity of working in the National Guard. These young workers and farmers in uniform cannot be put in the same category as the policemen. They are workers—they come from the factory—workers who are working day time in the factory or on the farm and during the evenings drill for the purpose of killing their brothers and fathers, who fight for a bigger piece of bread, for better conditions. Thousands of young Party members and Y.C.L.-ers should join the National Guard, work among them, explain to them what roles the bourgeoisie makes them play in the class struggle. Continuous mass agitation, leaflets, copies of the **Daily Worker**, special papers in the armories must come into the hands of the National Guardsmen. We know very well that these young people are ready to receive us. Let us go to them. Work among them and win them over to our side.

The growing activity of the Communist Party in the factories, in the unions, and among the unemployed, increases the possibilities that the bourgeoisie will launch a final attack against the Party in order to cut us off from the masses. The readjustment of our work, taking all necessary measures in the preparation for the time of illegality, coupled with the most energetic fight against the threatening declaration of illegality against us, as well as intensified activity of the Party in the mobilization of the masses, will help us to destroy the plans of the bourgeoisie, to preserve our fighting policy, and to maintain contact with the masses in the transition time and even during the most vicious terror of illegality. The more forceful and intensified is the fight against the terror, against illegality, the more successful will be our fight during the illegal period.