

Immediate Tasks of the Communist Party

I. A MODEL OF CHVOSTISM*

1. The resolution adopted at the Central Committee meeting of January 13th to 18th comes out for a labor party, not because an analysis of American political structure shows the necessity for a labor party to split off the mass of workers from the twin parties of capitalism, but because of "the reviving mass sentiments for a labor party."

2. It comes out for liquidation of the dual unions and a "new tone with regard to the A. F. of L." not because of any foresight as to the future of American trade unionism, nor because of any appreciation of the Leninist teachings on the menace of dual unionism and the necessity of working thru the mass trade unions and among the backward workers, but because of "the growth of the A.F.L. unions." After failing to foresee that growth, after predicting it could not come, the Party without any correction of its obviously mistaken analysis and tactics, "follows the masses" into the mass trade unions!

3 It comes out for a united front not because the C.P. should be a tireless fighter for proletarian unity, not because the interests of the masses require unity in elementary struggles, not because the divisions in the working class require a united front, not because of any appreciation of the Leninist teachings on this question, but because of "the strengthening of the desire of the masses for the united front," (that's lagging behind the masses) and because "the efforts of the Socialist Party to base itself on the trade unions and on the movement for a Labor Party shows that social reformism is trying to create a broad proletarian mass basis for itself."

(That's dragging at the tail of social reformism! If the S.P. were not trying to create "a broad proletarian mass basis" for itself, then apparently there would be no reason for the Communist Party to try to create a "broad proletarian mass basis for itself" either!)

Thus on the three major questions raised in the Central Committee Resolution

* *Chvostism* is a Russian word derived from *Chvost*, meaning tail. It indicates a failure on the part of the Party to foresee events, and attempt to lead the masses. Instead, each development catches the chvostist by surprise and he lags behind, at the tail, of the spontaneous movement of the masses.

Marginal Notes on the Latest Central Committee Resolution

By Bertram D. Wolfe

WORK in the unions of the A.F.L."

2. The Party makes further hesitant steps toward liquidating the dual unions Evidence:

"The Party must take the initiative in the struggle for the unity of the trade unions . . . within the framework of general affiliation to the A. F. of L."

"The existing revolutionary trade unions and their locals join the A.F.L. or its unions as organized units . . ."

(But here arises the problem, if you cannot enter "as organized units" will you continue your suicidal policy of dual unionism so harmful to the Party and the unions?)

The answer is ambiguous:

First we read: "In those cases when collective joining is not possible, members of the Red Unions should join the unions of the A.F.L. individually." (Does that mean, that the "Red Union" will still be kept up?)

Then we read:

"Only those revolutionary unions, whose entrance into the A.F.L. at the present time is impossible in practice, will TEMPORARILY continue to exist independently, EXTENDING THEIR MASS BASE . . . struggling consistently for trade union unity and their entrance into the A.F.L. and HELPING IN THE GENERAL STRENGTHENING OF THE POSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TRADE UNION MOVEMENT." (Emphasis Mine—B.D.W.)

(Is this Communist Clarity? or Stachelian jugglery? "Quarrel about tactics," said Lenin, "but give clear slogans!")

3. The Party admits that its method of trade union "work" has been harmful.

"The tone used in the press with regard to the A. F. of L. must be changed, criticizing and exposing the reactionary leaders . . . BUT TREATING THE A.F.L. LOCALS AND UNIONS AS MASS WORKERS ORGANIZATIONS."

"The Communists . . . must work like REAL trade unionists, looking after the affairs of the unions, SEEING TO ITS STRENGTHENING AND WIDENING." (Emphasis mine—B.D.W.)

B. On The Labor Party

"In these changed conditions," reads the Resolution. (You would think that the two-party system had disappeared for five years and suddenly reappeared!

—B.D.W.) "the Communist Party must change its negative position toward the Labor Party question." ("Negative" is good; "hostile" would have been honest.)

"All premature organizational moves (on the Labor Party) should be carefully avoided."

But alas, this is only "on a national scale." On a local scale, the Party lays plans which can only discredit the movement and short-circuit the sentiment for a Labor Party, and produce caricature "labor parties," replicas of the "League Against War and Fascism." For the Resolution says:

"In those states and localities where the conditions have matured for the formation of a mass Labor Party, the Party then SHOULD ITSELF (emphasis mine!) or through people and organizations CLOSE TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY (emphasis again mine!) take the initiative in giving organizational form to this movement."

What could such a party be but the C.P. and its "mass" organizations? What has it in common with a Labor Party based on the trade unions and aiming above all at setting the Trade Unions on the road to independent political action? A Communist Party disguised as a Labor Party hurts the Communist Party and hurts the Labor Party movement. Is it not time we were done with such dangerous nonsense?

And then there is the "Four-Type" Labor Party analysis with its sectarian implications of a "left labor party" caricature "from below," i.e. without the official trade union organizations. The first two types "are not labor parties but bourgeois third parties" and should be fought unswervingly. The "third type" which the Resolution rejects, is what Lenin was talking about when he reminded us that in working for and in a labor party we would build a party which would be led for a time, in America, by even greater reactionaries than those at the head of the British Labor Party. It wouldn't hurt to reread the old Labor Party discussions and decisions before rushing into print with caricature labor parties "from below" and similar mistakes of which the Party should have been cured over ten years ago!

C. On The United Front And The Socialist Party

Fewer steps forward and more confusion. That the Party recognizes "a sectarian and formal approach to the question of a united front" is to be welcomed. Also that it recognizes that "first of all, the Party must explain in its own ranks the significance of the united front in the conditions of the U.S.A." Further: that "the Party press must bring forward more convincing arguments in the polemic against the policy and leaders of the S.P., avoiding the replacement of arguments by abuse."

But even before "explaining in the Party ranks" is it not necessary that the Central Committee become itself clear about its analysis of the S.P. and its groupings? The resolution provides for "particularly strong and intensive fire against the Right Wing," "an extremely intensive struggle against the middle trend," and against the leaders of the left to expose their "insincerity." These are the words of a Central Committee more afraid of making an error than they are of being unclear. A clear analysis of the leftward trend in the S.P. is the first prerequisite to a tactical line which will foster that trend.

And as to "united front," it is not the same here as in Germany or France. There if the S.P. and C.P. cooperate, it brings in the bulk of the working class. Here S.P. and C.P. together influence an insignificant minority of the working class. Agreement between the two parties AMOUNTS TO LITTLE MORE THAN AN AGREEMENT TO WORK FOR A UNITED FRONT. Only a united front which includes the mass organizations, the trade unions (and "representatives" of minorities and self-constituted "delegates" as in the Washington Conference are no substitute), only a united front including the trade unions can really be a lever to set the American masses in motion. Should this not be made clear in a resolution which reads: "First of all, the Party must explain in its own ranks the significance of the united front in the conditions of the U.S.A.?"

D. Towards Party Democracy

In our long and hard fight to correct the line and regime of our Party, a fight in which we often received slanders, insults, and even physical blows for our pains, we have learned as the proverb

(Continued on Page 4)

THE SPANISH REVOLUTION On the Eve of Great Struggles

This is the first of a series of five articles law passed by the Republican-Socialist

THE END OF A JOURNEY Ben Gitlow, Social Democrat

By H. BAIL

tria where the Communists "impeded" the revolution and the Socialists "led"

TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Marginal Notes on the Resolution of the C.P. Central Committee

(Continued from Page 3)

goes, "to be grateful for small favors." At any rate, I think we can detect in this Resolution the first sign of troubled Communist conscience in the matter of lack of inner party democracy. That seems to be the motivation for the following passages:

1. "It is necessary to carefully explain inside the Party the tasks of the reorganization of trade union work, avoiding taking steps without preparation, which can only hinder matters."

2. "First of all, the Party must explain to its own ranks the significance of the united front . . ."

3. "The INITIATIVE of the lower Party organizations must be developed in every way, giving them leadership MORE ON THE BASIS OF CONVICTION. . ."

However, actions speak louder than words. Would it not have been better if the Labor Party question had been freely discussed pro and con in the Party ranks and press PRIOR to Browder's speech committing the Party without decision by its members? (Think of the lengthy, free, labor party discussion in the days of our leadership of the Party! Where would you have been, Comrade Browder, if we had decided without discussion against your opposition, and you were opposed, and then expelled you?) Would it not have been better if the liquidation of red unions had been freely discussed and decided by the membership? (We had to expel no Zacks in our day!)

New Dangers

These methods of "correcting" mistakes and errors by chicanery, by chvostism, by "changed conditions," by fiat from above with no previous discussion by the membership and no previous decision by them, entail new dangers:

1. "Corrections" that do not correct.

2. No re-education of the Party. Serious demoralization and dropping out or expulsion of great numbers of honest but misguided, ultra-leftist elements.

3. No convincing of the alienated non-party masses that the Party's errors have been abandoned.

4. No guarantee against return to old errors.

5. No change in inner party life here or in the International.

Some Immediate Necessities

What must be done? A few things that should be done immediately to further a correct line and Communist unity are:

1. A real change in the Trade Union line. The immediate abolition of the T.U.U.L. as a dual union center; a speedy liquidation of ALL dual unions without exception; an abandonment of the perspective for the formation of an Independent Federation of Labor*; a public pledge not to engage in union

splitting in the future but to defend trade union unity:

2. A genuine analysis of the nature of the united front problem in America.

3. A speedy correction of the "left labor party" caricature.

4. A direct speedy answer to our letter on Jan. 15, 1935. We can recognize that the Central Committee's resolution of its sessions of Jan. 15 to 18, is in part an attempt to meet some of our proposals, a kind of unaddressed "answer." But that is no way to discuss differences, clarify problems, and remove obstacles to joint work and ultimate unity. Comradely discussion, ideological clarity, an open correction of errors, the restoration of inner party democracy, Communist unity—these are not duties to us, nor to yourselves, so much as they are life and death necessities of the movement and the working class. No number of paper resolutions or ideological wriggles and twists and squirms can discount those obligations. They must be settled in full. The good of the movement nationally and internationally requires it.

* The resolution reads: "It is now inadvisable (!!) to put the question of forming an Independent Federation of Labor."

BOOKS RECEIVED

ART AND THE LIFE OF ACTION, by Max Eastman. Knopf. 230 pp., \$2.00

Max Eastman "discovers" new arguments for the old theory of "art for art's sake." (Review later)

* * *

WHO GETS THE MONEY, by Walter Rautenstrauch. Harpers. 99 pp., \$1.00

A statistical analysis of the distribution of the national income, with certain implications for speeding recovery and combatting depression. (Review later by Economist).

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UNION-MANAGEMENT COOPERATION IN THE "STRETCH-OUT," by Richmond C. Nyman and Elliott Dunlap Smith. Yale University Press. 210 pp., \$3.00.

(Review by B. Herman)
MERITISM, by Jerome G. Locke. Christopher Publishing House, Boston. 260 pp., \$2.50.

Shows how to "abolish profit and preserve incentive" by rewarding everybody with merits instead of money!

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