

The New York Municipal Election Campaign

By Herbert Zam

THE municipal election campaign of the Communist Party in New York City was ushered in by the adoption of an opportunist, municipal-reform election platform written by Weinstone and forced thru the District Committee without even a discussion and without even the opportunity for making criticism or amendments. Despite the fact that under the barrage of the followers of the C.P.-Majority Group this platform was surreptitiously suppressed, and replaced by no program at all, it gave the entire election campaign of the Party an opportunist character.

Coming at a period of growing radicalization of the workers, as a climax to two years of severe struggle in important industries (needle, food), the election campaign offered the Communist Party a splendid opportunity for mobilizing the workers in a political struggle against capitalism, a struggle which would pass the bounds of parliamentary legalism. Such an achievement for the Party is of tremendous importance in its efforts to establish itself as the leader of the American workers in all their struggles. While the Communist Party has already led thousands and even hundreds of thousands in many severe class battles, it is still confronted with the task of demonstrating to the workers its leadership in the political struggle against capitalism, including the election campaign. The municipal election campaign this year offered the Communist Party this opportunity at a time when the both capitalist parties have openly become expressions of finance capital centered in New York and the Socialist Party has openly become the Party of the labor bureaucracy and of small capital, denying the class struggle and seeking to maintain the capitalist system. The fusion between finance capital and the state apparatus is so complete that every movement of the workers for improvement of their conditions brings them face to face with the forces of the government as a strike-breaking agency. The struggles of the workers are growing and are being directed more and more against the government and the capitalist system as a whole. These circumstances create the possibility for the Communist Party really placing itself at the head of the workers and directing them in their struggles for the improvement of their conditions, developing these struggles and raising them to a higher level, till they are aimed at the overthrow of the capitalist system and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. But in order to accomplish this task the Communist Party must itself have proper leadership and present a correct platform to the workers. Unfortunately, as a result of the crisis in the Party, both of these conditions are lacking at the present time.

The Conduct of the Election Campaign

The election platform of a Communist Party is not a mere set of demands. It is not collection of pre-election promises. It is a program of action for a certain period, and as such must combine the immediate tasks of the Party with its final aim of overthrowing capitalism in such a way as to utilize the immediate struggles of the workers in order to develop the conscious struggle against capitalism. The election platform of the Communist Party must therefore be based on an indictment of capitalism; it must demonstrate to the workers that their grievances arise out of the capitalist system, and it must develop such immediate demands as will direct the struggles of the workers against the capitalist system. The municipal election platform of Weinstone lacks this essential prerequisite. It treats each evil, not as an expression of capitalism, but as something by itself, thus making all immediate demands arising from such an analysis purely reformist. It separates the workers

of New York and their struggles from the rest of the working class of the United States and the world, leading to such opportunist mistakes as the total omission of the defense of the Soviet Union, the omission of mention of the struggles in the colonies and semi-colonies, the omission of all mention of the attacks on the Soviet Union at a time when the Manchurian railway had just been seized. The platform fails even to mention the Gastonia frame-up and the necessity for rallying all workers to the defense of Gastonia workers. The platform fails to point out the necessity for the working class struggling against the bad effects of capitalist rationalization, but contents itself with the frantic denunciation of "devilish devices of industrial speed-up". While on the one hand, the platform demands the abolition of the police and its substitution by a "toilers militia," it at the same includes the typical petty-bourgeois liberal demands for "smaller school-houses."

Thus, the election platform, far from serving as a means for rallying the Party membership and the revolutionary workers, and for directing and coordinating the activities of the working class along anti-capitalist channels, became a mill-stone around the neck of the Party, preventing it from carrying on a Communist election campaign and from utilizing the favorable objective situation for strengthening itself and winning thousands of workers for the revolutionary struggle.

The opportunist leadership which produced such a platform cannot be expected to be less opportunist in the election campaign proper. While its empty revolutionary bombast converts every open-air meeting into a "demonstration," and every Party meeting into a "united front," the essential work of organizing and mobilizing the workers has been completely neglected. The instructions for the Party membership, printed in the Daily Worker, are of the internationally famous "Codkind type," while the workers have never been given the Communist platform, either in the Daily Worker or in any other form. The Communist Party is the only Party in the election campaign which has not published a platform, which has not even published an official statement of its demands. The campaign is looked upon as a necessary formality, not as a means of mobilizing the workers. The struggle against the Socialist Party and social reformism generally has been completely abandoned, despite the opportunity for exposing them offered by their traitorous role in many recent labor struggles. The struggle against social reformism has been replaced by a struggle against the former Party leadership, the C.P.-Majority Group, and against the leading Communist figures in mass organizations. This has naturally given the S.P. an almost clear field for presenting itself as the Party of the workers. No real effort has even been made to mobilize the mass organizations and the workers behind the Party campaign; formal endorsements have been considered sufficient. Such is the opportunism that lied hidden under the "left" phraseology of the new "leadership."

The Fruits of Opportunism

This opportunist election campaign is having a serious effect upon the Communist movement in New York, not the most important of which will be the loss in votes in the elections. It tends to drive away workers who look to the Party for leadership. It creates a doubt in the minds of the masses as to whether our Party really is a Party participating in every struggle of the workers and leading these struggles. For this, the opportunist sectarian leadership of the Party is wholly responsible. It is stifling the Party and preventing the membership

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from acting as Communists. The overthrow of this "misleadership" is an absolute prerequisite to setting the Party once **more on the Leninist path**. This is a task not only for the Party members, but also for the revolutionary workers who follow the Party. The Communist Party of the United States is the Party of the workers and the workers must help save it from those who are at present ruining it. Every Communist must work for the Communist Party. Every class conscious worker must support the election campaign of the Communist Party and vote for its candidates. The mass organizations of the workers should rally their membership for the support of the Communist Party and its candidates as the only Party that stands for the interests of the workers.

Vote Communist! Support the Communist Campaign!

At the same time, it is the duty of the revolutionary workers to help correct the very serious mistakes which the Party is making, to help bring the Party out of its deep crisis. The workers will have to tell the Party, while they support it and vote for it, that the strengthening of the Communist movements cannot be achieved by expelling its best revolutionists, and by revising its revolutionary line—its destruction can be the only result. The workers cannot be mobilized by means of a false, non-Leninist line; the interests of the workers are not advanced by an opportunist platform and a passive opportunist election campaign. The election campaign is a warning to the Party membership and to the revolutionary workers of the danger that threatens our movement if the false line and the non-Communist tactics of the new "leadership" of the Party are not immediately eliminated.

The revolutionary workers will support the Communist Party because it is the Party of the working class. They will at the same time support the struggle of the C.P.-Majority Group to bring the Party back to the line of Lenin, to restore the Party as "the stalwart leader of the workers in fierce class battles."