

The Platform of Ultra-Leftism

by Herbert Zam

This is the first of a series of two articles by Herbert Zam on the Communist Party election platform.—Editor.

One of the greatest shortcomings of the Communist movement of the United States has been its isolation from the American-born workers. This is reflected in the absence of Communist influence in those industries in which the bulk of the workers are American-born (transportation, for instance), in the weakness of the movement in the small industrial towns and in its inability to make any sort of a showing in parliamentary activity. The small vote which the Communist Party has always received in all elections, a vote out of all proportion to the actual influence of the Party, is due largely to the fact that Communist strength is confined almost exclusively to the foreign-born workers in the United States, who are either disfranchised or else do not participate in elections for other reasons. The Communist movement in the United States will not be a mass movement until it has penetrated the American-born workers and recruited substantial numbers from among them. The election campaign is not the sole, nor even the primary means of accomplishing this, but it is a very important means. The election campaign offers the Communists in the United States an opportunity to speak to the American workers at a time when they are more politically awake and receptive than at any other time, and when the Communists can more readily secure a hearing. Properly utilized, a well-conducted election campaign can serve as the starting point for the Communists to break into this heretofore "closed territory."

The 1932 election campaign of the Communist Party has received a bad start. The election platform, adopted at the Chicago nominating convention, can not serve as the basis for a broad campaign to rally the masses behind the Communists in the struggle for their own immediate interests. It is a narrow, ultra-left, sectarian document which, giving the tone to the entire election campaign, can only serve to perpetuate the present isolation of the Communist Party from the American workers.

The "Revolutionary Way Out of the Crisis"

The central point of the election platform, around which the entire platform and the demands are built up, is "the revolutionary way out of the crisis." While we have been hearing quite a bit about this new discovery, the election platform explains the question so that there can be no misinterpretation. The "revolutionary way out of the crisis" is neither more nor less than the setting up of a proletarian dictatorship (a workers and farmers government) in the United States. The election platform makes the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship the central point of the Party's election campaign and proposes it to the workers as the answer to their present needs. The slogan of a workers and farmers government is not raised merely as a propaganda slogan, which would undoubtedly be correct; it is raised as a slogan of action around which to rally the workers today. The platform declares:

"Resist the carrying thru of the capitalist way out of the crisis! Fight for the workers way, for the revolutionary way out of the crisis—for the United States of Soviet America!"

Now it is one thing to raise this slogan—the revolutionary way out of the crisis—in, let us say, Germany, and quite another thing in the United States. In spite of the severity of the crisis, in spite of the great suffering of the masses, we are not on the eve of a revolution, we are not in a revolutionary situation. The masses of workers are not yet rebelling either against the capitalist system, or against the capitalist government, even tho there are signs of great discontent. The Communists cannot as yet rally the American workers on the issue of socialism versus capitalism, proletarian dictatorship versus bourgeois "democracy". If the communists are to lead the masses it must be on the basis of their current needs and demands, properly expressed in the election platform and in the campaign. Support of the masses of the workers for the Communist candidates cannot as yet be procured on the basis of the entire program of communism. It must be done on the basis of the defense of their present needs, in line with their present mood. To make support of any immediate demands of the Communists equivalent to or dependent upon support of the proletarian dictatorship, means isolation for the Party, means that its support will be confined to those workers who are already Communists. The immediate demands of the platform are confined to six, which, with the exception of the one for "self-determination of the Black Belt", are themselves not incorrect, altho very vague. But do these six demands exhaust the needs of the masses? Absolutely not! Such vital demands as shorter work week, against speed-up and rationalization, and for immediate unemployment relief are omitted. The platform has a general demand "against capitalist terror" but is silent on the concrete questions of freedom of speech, press and assembly, on the right to organize and to picket, on the use of injunctions, deportations, and armed forces against the workers. It forgets the political

prisoners (Mooney, Scottsboro boys, Imperial Valley prisoners and others) and is silent about the anti-labor laws (criminal syndicalism and criminal anarchy) under which workers are being put in jail. There is no demand for the protection of the foreign-born. There is the abstract "equal rights for Negroes", but no concrete slogans against lynching and jim-crowism, for enfranchisement, against the anti-intermarriage laws, and so on. Nothing is said on the question of protection of women and youth, on children or education (especially at the present time when a nation-wide campaign is being conducted against the free education system). The anti-imperialist demands are confined to: "Against imperialist war; for the defence of the Chinese people and of the Soviet Union!" The demand for recognition of the Soviet Union is again forgotten. (Has it again become opportunist?) America's colonies are non-existent in the platform. ("Self-determination for the Black Belt" but not for the Philippines, Hawaii, etc!) The activities of American imperialism in Latin America in fomenting war, changing governments, ruthless oppression of the native population, armed intervention and occupation, appear to be too insignificant to be included in an election platform. And on the burning international questions of reparations, war debts, League of Nations, the platform is just as silent. Is the American Com-

munist Party belatedly repeating the error of the German Party of considering these questions "of no concern to the workers"?

The Cardinal Error Of The Platform

The omission of all these important demands from the election platform is not accidental. It arises out of the cardinal error, making the proletarian dictatorship the central point of the campaign. In a revolutionary situation it is correct to concentrate on those slogans and demands which can best serve to rally the masses in the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship as against the government which cannot grant their demands. Thus, in 1917 in Russia, "bread, peace, land" served this purpose. Is this what the authors of the platform, the leaders of the Communist Party in the United States, have in mind when they pick out the six points to concentrate upon?

In 1928 the S.L.P. severely criticized the Communist Party platform as a "reformist" platform, because it had even more demands than that of the Socialist party! The S.L.P. platform is the only "revolutionary" one because it has but one demand, the "unconditional surrender of the capitalist class." After having tried to steal De Leonism from the S. L. P., are the leaders of the Communist Party also trying to steal this feature from its platform?

THE RECORD OF FASCISM IN POWER

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outside of the State!" In April 1927 there was issued the so-called Great Charter of Labor to regularize the relations of the Fascist unions to the State and to "assure the harmonious collaboration of all factors in production." "Professional and trade union organization is free," we are brazenly informed in the face of the murderous suppression of the real labor unions. "But," it is added, "the legally recognized and the State-controlled syndicate (that is, the Fascist union.—Alfa) alone has the right to represent legally the total category of workers for whom it is established, to defend their interests legally in relation to the State and other professional unions and to form obligatory agreements for all workers belonging to that category." These "legally recognized" unions receive dues from all workers, whether members or not. In fact, these dues are checked off the wages. When, in 1929, the "corporate State" was finally established, the Fascist syndicates became integral parts of the State apparatus.

The full philosophy of the Fascist unions is given in Paragraph 4 of the Great Charter of Labor:

"In the collective labor agreement there is expressed the solidarity among the various factors thru the equalization of the counterposed interests of the employers and employees and thru their subordination to the higher interests of production and the State."

The Economic Policy Of Fascism

Mussolini's first care upon his accession to power were economic questions. At the very outset, all capital levies, inheritance taxes, taxes on industry, and the like, left over from the old regime, were immediately abolished because they "disturb commerce and industry, property and the family." In place of these levies, a tax on wages was introduced. The entire State budget rests upon indirect taxes for they "limit consumption and leave a large quantity of goods for export, whereas direct taxes would endanger production." State industries, nationalized industries, such as telephone, radio, parcel post, railroads, armaments, the match monopoly, were turned over into private hands. But this was only apparently a denationalization tendency for at the same time that these industries were turned over to private hands for the greater profit of the bourgeoisie, extremely close ties were formed between the State and heavy industrial capital, a veritable fusion in fact. An elaborate and extensive policy of the stimulation of industrial capitalism was worked out and initiated. A big impetus was given to the formation of trusts on a large scale.

As a part of his social-economic policy Mussolini placed a ban upon emigration and even upon the free movement of workers, especially agricultural workers, thruout Italy.

Fascism And The Church

The anti-clericalism of the early Fascist movement is well known. Not only did the Fascists demand the confiscation of all the properties of the Church ("property under the dead hand"), but in the *Popolo d'Italia* Mussolini wrote on May 11, 1919:

"We demand the separation of the Catholic Church and the State, the abolition of the constitutional privilege according to which the Catholic Church is elevated into the State religion. We demand the confiscation of all Church property and episcopal benefits. The State must recognize the Church merely as a private organization, subjected to the general laws . . . The exercise of religious cults and instruction must be permissible only outside of public and private schools."

The practise of the Fascist dictatorship has of course been notoriously the opposite. The Church has not been separated from the State. No Church property has been confiscated. The influence of religion in the schools has been greatly deepened; one of the worst offenses is to fail

to display a picture of Mussolini or a crucifix! In return the Church functionaries have been transferred practically into officials of the Fascist State. At the beginning of 1929 Mussolini concluded a treaty with the Pope which definitely established the Catholic Church as State Church and regulated its relations with the Fascist regime. We shall examine later on the roots and significance of the unceasing struggle between Fascism and the Catholic secular and religious organizations.

The Fascist Foreign Policy

The foreign policy of the Fascist regime has been an outspokenly imperialistic one, characterized by the most sensational saber-rattling and jingoist bravado. In the first years of the regime a certain flirtation was attempted with France but it did not take long before a definite anti-French alignment was developed which involved also sharp antagonisms with the French puppet-states, especially Yugoslavia. Today Italy operates, in its foreign and domestic policy, under the patronage of Wall Street, upon which it really depends for financial existence.

To support its imperialistic pretensions Fascist Italy long ago reorganized its military institutions in the directions of a thoroughgoing militarism. The term of service was raised from eight months to a year and a half. The standing army was increased from 230,000 to 350,000 men. The term of service of the marines was raised from 24 to 28 months. The Guardia Regia (Royal Guard), consisting of 35,000 men was indeed dissolved but the Carabinieri, the armed policemen, were increased from 65,000 to 90,000. In addition to everything else there is the Fascist militia, the special "party army" of the Fascist party, reaching the enormous figure of 600,000. All in all, there are today in Italy under arms at least 1,000,000 men!

As a mass movement Fascism does indeed rest upon the petty bourgeoisie even upon certain backward sections of the proletariat. But the fundamental line of policy of Italian Fascism, in spite of all its demagogy and gestures, is the expression of the basic interests of industrial capital. It is this tremendous contradiction that generates the forces of disintegration of Fascism.

On Wednesday, July 13, Herbert Zam spoke before the student body of the Barnard Summer School for Girls in Industry on the subject "Which Program Should Workers Follow?" After pointing out the collapse of capitalism and the misery it brings to the masses of the toilers, as demonstrated by the present world-wide crisis, Zam explained the Communist doctrine of establishing a proletarian dictatorship as a transition stage to usher in a socialist society, serving as a weapon to expropriate the capitalist class and destroy its counter-revolutionary attempts, finally liquidating it as a class. In this connection he pointed out that the belief of the Socialists in the possibilities of utilizing bourgeois democracy to legislate for socialism, their opposition to expropriation and to proletarian dictatorship in reality operated for the preservation of the capitalist system.

The progress of the Communist movement, Herbert Zam pointed out, was hindered by the existing disunity and the wrong policies and mistakes of the leaders of the Communist Party, expressed particularly in the trade unions and mass workers organizations, in the relations to Socialist workers ("theory of social-fascism") and in the rejection of the united front tactics. Workers who wish to carry on a fight against capitalism and its evils must become Communists and also fight for Communist