

Some Questions of Communist Unity

We are printing below an article by Herbert Zam, expressing the point of view of the Communist Opposition, which we hope will be the first contribution to an extensive and fruitful discussion on the problems of Communist unity, particularly unity between the Proletarian Party and the Communist Party (Opposition). We invite other comrades to contribute their ideas on this matter. We particularly invite members of other organizations to do so. All contributions will be published as written with or without names as requested.—Editor.

Only a blind person can fail to see the fermentation inside the labor movement resulting from the blows of the crisis and the inability of the present labor movement to really lead the working class. The Communist movement, which is not living in a vacuum and which is affected by the currents and winds blowing in the ranks of the workers, sees a similar fermentation inside of its own ranks. The splits which have taken place since 1929, the formation of numerous groups and grouplets and then the splits in the new groups, all of these are not accidental phenomena, nor expressions of personal attitudes. There can be no doubt that they are expressions of a general process of division inside of the Communist movement, representing a struggle over ideas. But just as we have a process of disintegration, there exists at the same time the opposite tendency also. There is no doubt that at the present time there is beginning a general re-orientation, expressing itself as yet on a very small scale but extremely important nevertheless, because pointing also to a general regrouping of forces.

The Proletarian Party

In this light we have to analyze particularly the relations of forces among the various Communist opposition groups in the United States and their mutual interactions. America, which is the land of "exceptionalism", is also "exceptional" in this respect. The world Communist movement, which is divided into three main streams, is here divided into four streams. There are the official Communist Party, the Communist Opposition and the Trotsky group, as in other countries; but there also exists the Proletarian Party, whose adherence to the fundamentals of Communism cannot be challenged and which organizationally is by no means the least of these factors.

The Proletarian Party did not come into existence as a result of the present crisis in Communism, nevertheless, life itself has brought about the situation in which it plays a very important role precisely in the present crisis. A real Communist organization bases its struggles and current positions on the events and conditions of today and not on the memories or traditions or prejudices of yesterday. Life makes friends of people who yesterday were enemies and enemies of people who yesterday were friends. In neither case is the memory of the previous condition powerful enough to prevent the establishment of the new relationship. What is true for life generally is particularly true for politics, for the revolutionary movement. We, who are today a tiny minority and hope tomorrow to be the overwhelming majority must make up our minds that in the process of being thus transformed, we may have to accept today's enemies as the comrades of tomorrow. The past of course remains with us, the rights and wrongs are to be established, the experiences weighed, but this historical process cannot in any way interfere with new orientations, new alignments, based upon new situations and new points of view.

The Proletarian Party And The Communist Opposition

In the struggle for Communist unity, which is a prerequisite to real leadership of the masses, new alignments are inevitable. When based upon real agreement on principle, they should not only be

welcomed but actively promoted. This is the situation which exists today as between the Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition. These two are the most important of the Communist opposition groups. They are not only the strongest and most influential but they are also the closest politically. And this is true in spite of the fact that, in the leadership of both groups, there are comrades who in the past occupied extremely antagonistic positions. It is clear that if the political crisis for unity between these two groups is found to exist and if such unity is actually achieved, it will have an importance which cannot be overestimated, and not only in this country. Does such a political basis exist?

First of all, it is necessary to repeat that, on the fundamentals of Communism, there is absolute agreement between us and never has there been any disagreement. There is further agreement on the attitude to the Soviet Union as a workers state and the rejection of all conceptions which would see this state as the instrument or as an instrument for bringing back capitalism (the "Thermidor" theory in its various forms). Con-

The Proletarian Party and the C. P.-O.

by Herbert Zam

sequently there is left to discuss the more important questions of current strategy and tactics of the Communist movement today.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to discuss these questions only in the abstract and to measure agreement and disagreement thru the medium of words on paper. Many of these matters have been weighed in actual joint work among the workers and in the labor organizations. The Mooney Congress at Chicago, in which the Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition participated, demonstrated our agreement not only on the question of the united front but also on a whole series of other questions which came before that body. It is a fact that the Proletarian Party delegation and the Communist Opposition found themselves united in a common position against the sectarian and, in the last analysis, splitting policies of the official Communist Party, which on this question also received the support of the Trotsky group. Our agreement on the united front has also been demonstrated in many instances by work of

the two organizations in Detroit. The Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition both are opposed to the tactics of splitting the trade unions and other labor organizations, of setting up "dual" "revolutionary", "rank-and-file" trade unions; both favor working within the existing unions in order to win them and the workers in them to a revolutionary policy.

The Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition both are opposed to the conception of the American Negroes as a national minority and to the slogan of "self-determination." The Communist Party (Opposition) and, we believe, the Proletarian Party both favor the slogan of "full social, political and economic equality", as being applicable to an oppressed racial minority. The Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition both believe, with Marx, that the international revolutionary movement is "international in content, national in form," that the prime task of the Communists in each country is the solution of their own problems, arising out of the conditions in their own country and are therefore opposed to the practice of subordinating the policies of the Communists of any

country to the political requirements and factional necessity of the Communists of another country, whether the Soviet Union, Germany, or Prinkipo. On all of these matters, the Proletarian Party and the Communist Opposition agree. For all of these reasons, in the last period of time, a great deal of cooperation has taken place in actual mass work, without any formal agreements. Is it not quite clear that the time has come to establish this cooperation on a more substantial basis and even to go beyond mere cooperation?

* * *

Some Disagreements Remain

That disagreements still exist between the two organizations cannot be denied. We disagree as to the interpretation of each other's past. We do not yet agree entirely on the nature of the proposed demands which it is permissible for a Communist organization to advocate. There also exists some differences as to party structure and methods of work. But it is clear that our agreements far outweigh our differences. They cannot remain as insurmountable obstacles to unity or cooperation.

The question of the interpretation of the past should remain open. We are as yet too close to all these events to be able to pass objective judgment with final authority. Just as there is no unanimity within the ranks of the Communist Opposition on all matters of historical interpretation just as our present position may in many cases be different from our position on the same questions some time ago, so it is inevitable that such differences should also exist in a united Communist group, made up of comrades from different streams of the movement. But such differences will not in any way impair our unity of action on current problems, which is the essential question.

The unification of the Proletarian Party with the Communist Party (Opposition) (if this desirable step is achieved) would by no means solve the problem of Communist unity. It would be an important step in that direction, to be followed up by consistent efforts to further unify the ranks of the Communists, so as to build in this country, a united, powerful mass Communist Party.

possible! Therefore, soft-pedal everything about Germany except endorsements and "analyses" that will help bolster up old illusions! This is the secret of the peculiar embarrassment that the C.P.S.U. feels in the face of the German events.

This is an explanation—but not a justification! Such an ostrich policy merely deepens the present grave defeat and invites future disaster. It not only deprives the German workers of the support they naturally expect and should receive from their Soviet brothers; it also degrades the political understanding of the Soviet party and the Soviet workers; it prevents any possibility of real self-criticism and learning from costly errors; it drives the Comintern headlong towards another catastrophe.

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* * *

Berlin, Germany.

But the attitude of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, speaking to the people of the Soviet Union and indeed to the toiling people of the whole world, must necessarily be different from the attitude and policy of the Soviet Union as a state, as outlined above. This difference is not something new, just discovered; it is as old as the Soviet power itself and every thinking worker understands why it must be so.

It is quite obviously the duty of the C.P.S.U., as the leader of the toiling masses of the Soviet Union, to brand German Fascism in the sharpest form and to conduct an implacable campaign against it. All of the factories, all of the collective farms, all of the villages, all of the unions, all of the Red Army units, must be stirred up to moral and material support of the German working class against Fascism. Resolutions must be adopted, money collected, demonstrations organized.

And so it happened in the past. We remember the campaign against the reactionary drive in Latvia, against the terror in Hungary, against Fascism in Italy, against the savagery of the Kuomintang. We remember the campaign of support to the general strike in England in 1926.

The Failure Of The C.P.S.U.

But today it must be declared openly that there is hardly a sign of any campaign against Fascism on the part of the C.P.S.U.! It may seem almost incredible but it is nevertheless a fact. We have before us copies of the "Pravda," the central organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, thruout March and April of this year. There is no evidence of any campaign of the party against the Fascist terror in Germany. There are plenty of items containing information and analyses of events in Germany but not a single report of a single resolution of a factory, of a single mass demonstration, of a single money collection drive. For weeks there was not even an editorial on Germany!

The sowing campaign, the industrial campaign, the campaign of the fiftieth anniversary of Karl Marx, all have devoted to long articles, speeches, sketches.

by A. P.

theses, official celebrations, etc. Of course properly so, because these campaigns are of great importance. But no sign of any party campaign against German Fascism. Perhaps, it may be argued, there is going on a secret (non-public) campaign in the ranks of the party. But even if this very improbable supposition were to be the case, what about the millions of workers and peasants in the Soviet Union? Are not they to be aroused in support of their German fellow-workers? Are they not to be aroused against the Fascist menace?

We reject what is apparently the easiest explanation of this phenomenon: that the campaign of the C.P.S.U. is being suppressed in the interests of the foreign policy of the Soviet state. We reject this explanation because it is nonsense. What "interests of foreign policy" could possibly be an obstacle to a campaign of the C.P.S.U. against Fascism, when the Nazis as a party are carrying on the most shameless campaign against "Bolshevism"? The C. P. S. U. has carried on campaigns against Italian Fascism, while the Soviet Union was negotiating diplomatic and commercial agreements with Italy. The C.P.S.U. has carried on campaigns against British imperialism, while the Soviet Union was trying very hard to improve its economic relations with Great Britain. The C.P.S.U. has carried on a vigorous campaign against American lynch justice in connection with the Scottsboro case, while the Soviet Union was doing its best to obtain recognition and credits from Washington.

The Real Reason

No! The real reason is to be found not in the alleged "nationalistic" policy of the Soviet power but in the fundamentally false and self-defeating policy of the Communist International.

In the resolution of the executive of the C.I., adopted on April 1, 1933, and published in full in the "Pravda", we read:

"The presidium of the E.C.C.I. declares that the political line and organizational course which the C.C. of the C. P. of Germany, with Comrade Thaelmann at the head, followed up to the Hitlerite overturn and at the moment of their overturn, was completely correct."

In his report, which was approved in this resolution, Comrade Heckert plainly stated that really the workers had not been defeated in Germany at all, that the "revolutionary upsurge" was still "growing", that Fascism was "declining" already, and so on and so on. The German Communist Party, which was, of course, the policy of the leadership of the Communist International, has led to the victory of Fascism—but nevertheless it is "completely correct."

The masses of the Soviet party and of its sympathizers have been fed upon the illusion of the perfection and infallibility of the leadership of the C.P.S.U. "with Stalin at the head", and of the leadership of the Communist International. The maintenance of this doctrine of infallibility and perfection is precisely the condition for the maintenance of the present regime and method of political leadership in the C.I. To launch a "German" campaign in the C. P. S. U. would be the most devastating challenge, even repudiation, of this claim to infallibility and perfection. It would threaten the whole bureaucratic structure built up in the last several years. It would dramatize to every Soviet Communist, to every Soviet worker, to every Soviet peasant, that the much-advertised Communist Party of Germany, which did not take a step without the knowledge and approval of Stalin, has failed, completely and miserably failed and failed in spite of the most favorable circumstances, has failed, moreover, after years of reports of its constantly mounting successes! Obviously im-

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