

World Socialism

Will There Be Unity In France?

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UNITY NO LONGER ABSTRACT QUESTION

The problem of the re-unification of the revolutionary movement is assuming concrete forms as a result of the decision of the French Socialist Party in favor of a united revolutionary party and the measures it has initiated to carry out this decision.

Two meetings have already taken place to discuss this matter, the first on April 11 and the second on April 18. Both meetings took place in the office of the National Council of the Socialist Party.

The first meeting was attended only by representatives of the Socialist Party and the Party of Proletarian Unity, but at the second meeting there were also present representatives from the Communist Party and from several small groups attached to neither party. At this meeting a Unification Committee was set up, consisting of two representatives from each organization. Each delegation is to submit a draft outlining its ideas on the subject of unity, so that a beginning in the work can be made.

SOCIALIST PARTY'S PROPOSALS

A wide difference exists between the attitude of the Socialist Party and that of the Communist Party on this question. The Socialist Party has laid down the following two points as the basis for a united party and for a unity program:

1. "The organization of the working class as a class party for the conquest of power—which does not mean participation in the government, as to this no confusion is possible today—with a view to transforming capitalist society on Socialist or Communist lines."

2. The action of the party to be laid down by the party itself at its meetings."

Point number two is aimed at preventing a situation where the party would simply be a puppet in the hands of another party, as the Communist Parties are today, having no independent existence so far as the determination of policies or leadership is concerned. The first point leaves the specific formulation of the program of the united party either to the Unity Congress or other future action by the party itself, if agreement on the basic kernel of the program is secured in advance.

C.P. FOR 'UNITY' FROM BELOW

To counter these two points, the Communist Party proposes that joint membership meetings of the organizations of the two parties be organized to discuss the questions of unity. This is another form of the well-known "from below" tactic. The Communist Party refuses to come to an agreement, refuses to commit itself, but wishes joint membership meetings at which to agitate the membership of the Socialist Party. This is obviously not a unity maneuver, but a factional maneuver. The Communist Party has so much faith in the workers, that it is unwilling to leave the decision on all unity questions to the joint membership of the two parties. Or perhaps the fact that the Socialist Party has several times as many members as the Communist Party has something to do with its reluctance to agree to unity.

Another obstacle is very likely to be the demand of the Communist Party that the program of the Communist International be accepted as the program of the united party. This demand has been made in England in the negotiations between the Communist Party and the Independent Labor Party and rejected by the latter.

SECTS FOR DIVISION

An interesting sidelight on the unity negotiations is provided by the role of some of the revolutionary sects. The Trotskyites in France joined the Socialist Party some time ago. At the time of joining they gave a purely factional reason—there might be unity between the two big parties and they didn't want to be left out in the cold. Now that they are in the Socialist Party their sectarian natures once again come to the surface—now they are against unity. The Brandierites have a similar position. August Thalheimer, the theoretician of the International Communist Opposition, characterizes the demand of the French Party for unity "as senseless maneuvers" of the "reformists." These sects howled for unity when the two big parties were tearing at each others' throats. But when an approach to unity is actually being made they hasten to put obstacles in the way. To a sect, the sect always comes first.

WHAT NEXT?

With both the Austrian and French Parties on record in favor of organic unity, this is no longer an academic question. Other Parties and groups (particularly the Independent Labor Party of England and the Socialist Party of Sweden, both having no international affiliations) have adopted a similar attitude. This is a matter which has been brought to the front by the new international situation. Important changes have taken place in the Socialist International as a result of the defeat in Germany and the struggles in Austria and Spain. In the Communist camp also important changes have taken place. While the Communist Parties in the capitalist countries have declined, the special position of the Soviet Union prevents it from being the center of a real international movement. The formation of a single, united International would undoubtedly be a tremendous step forward. It would be futile to deny that at present there are tremendous obstacles in the way of such unity. Nevertheless, it is an issue which is bound to confront every important organization sooner or later.

GERMAN RIGHT WING DISRUPTS PARTY

We have just learned that the Prague Central Committee of the German Social Democratic Party has informed the Socialist International that in the future it will have no relations with the two Left comrades, Bechel and Aufhausen, who have till now been members of the Central Committee; that all financial support to the "New Beginning" group is being discontinued; and that the head of the contact work in Carlsbad is removed.

With this action the extreme right wing in the German Social Democracy has destroyed the outward and formal unity which existed in the party up to now. The Left group is well known in the United States among intelligent Socialists. Its program, "Socialism's New Beginning," was published by the League for Industrial Democracy with an introduction by Norman Thomas.

This group is practically the only Socialist group conducting illegal work in Germany and has the support of a majority of the Socialist workers in Germany. The Prague Central Committee is isolated from the German workers and Socialists, and is active only among the emigrants.

The present action of the Prague Central Committee is an effort to utilize its financial power and international contacts as a factional weapon against the Left in the party.