

"Communist" Party Convention Theme

We'll Make Capitalism Work!

Detroit—The 22nd National Convention of the Communist Party USA (CP) was a suit-and-tie affair. The speeches droned on and on. "Respectability" oozed from every crack and cranny of their gathering. All of this was the outward expression of the likewise "respectable" (to the bourgeoisie) essence of the political line of the CP. All this was put on display at their public rallies during convention week.

Their political line, for many years now, has been nothing but useless, or, when somewhat influential, poison for the working class in its revolutionary struggle. But this occasion was somewhat more significant. With the crisis intensifying and war looming, they hear their call to go into action. Far from seeing the developing situation as one which will help expose the absolute bankruptcy of this crisis-ridden system and strengthen the revolutionary forces, the CP has come forward begging to be cut in on the action by helping to make an unworkable system work and nurse it along.

They are *revisionist*. They are "communist" in name only. This makes them particularly dangerous since the name "communist" historically represents revolution—while the CP tries to make it stand for reformism. Also, this time around, the ruling class saw fit to make a bigger deal out of the CP. They let them use the Cobo convention arena (the same arena the Republican Party will be using for its 1980 Presidential Convention). For the first time delegations from fellow foreign revisionist parties were allowed to attend, and their convention was given wide coverage, including front-page news in the Detroit media. Most importantly, while the CP serves the U.S. imperialists through their reformism, they're openly loyal to another imperialist master, the Soviet Union.

"Save Dodge Main"

They thought they struck gold when they announced their plan to Save Dodge Main. It was their reference point throughout their whole public rally at the convention, a shining example of their overall strategy to "change things" in America. Really, it was a sharp exposure of their opportunist line.

They started out the rally on a militant footing: "either you run the plant, or we (the workers) will" they warned Chrysler. This applause-getter, obviously, was looked on in amusement at Chrysler world headquarters. And just to make sure everyone realized that this was indeed an idle threat, what the CP really had in mind for Dodge Main was spelled out in the next breath: you, the capitalists should run it better, and we will tell you how to do it.

First, Angela Davis told us, "Cut down on Iacocca's [Chrysler's head] \$360,000 per year salary." Iacocca was already preparing an announced reduction of the top executives' yearly salary to \$1 a year. Next, the CP's General Secretary Gus Hall advised that what is needed is some legislation that would establish a "plant security fund" to be financed by "payroll taxes" so that when a plant is in trouble, the fund can be used to "bail it out". A governing board, including politicians, executives and workers would determine how and when the funds are used.

He admitted that the purpose of the fund would be to "guarantee that the plant would stay open and productive" and "protect Chrysler's investments." Finally, Hall advised that there would be nothing wrong with the government running the plant—that is, if individual capitalists can't run their plant, then the capitalist class as a whole, using its state power, should step in and take over the decision making. As he put it, "This is not a radical solution, it is just sound business practice." "Protect Chrysler's investment," "sound business practice." Yes, whatever is good for business!

How could they ever justify *this* except by claiming that they're only "concerned with the welfare of the workers," in other words, the worst possible thing that could happen to you is to lose your job and the most you can ever hope for is what the CP calls your "basic right to earn a living," to be a slave to some exploiter so you can "pay the rent." Such schemes in the CP's little mind are indeed as laughable as they are impossible, but at the same time they are useful to their capitalist masters to the extent that they dull the anger that erupts over events like the massive layoffs of Chrysler workers and the dog-eat-dog anarchy of the system that breeds this over and over again. And just to make clear the CP's role in siphoning off any revolutionary sentiment into dead-end reformism, Angela Davis boldly announced the goal of one million signatures on a petition to "Save Dodge Main." This is the CP's view of the masses of people's role in all this: a pressure group on the powers that be to make sure that they run things better.

"We Want Electoral Power"

While they hope to make a splash to get a little piece of the action, and a little bit of influence with the ruling class immediately (as with Dodge Main) the CP also has a more long-term strategy.

On the one hand, they seek to gain influence using mass pressure tactics organized by "watchdog" committees that would try to implement a 12-point "people's agenda." This was clearly laid out at their mass rally. At the same time, they put out the line that the

ultimate way to change things is through elections. They push CP candidates as well as "anyone who represents a viable alternative," according to Angela Davis. These "communists" sound more like the League of Women Voters.

Their model would be something like the Italian Communist Party (PCI) which rode the backs of the working class into positions up near the highest ruling circles of government. They did this by posing as opponents of the system and spokesman of the "welfare of the workers." Once given authority in certain localities, the PCI went about proving how loyal they were to the ruling class by coming down hard on uprisings of workers and students, keeping them down. The head of the PCI even sits on the board of directors of Italy's third largest corporation. In the 1980 elections, in all likelihood, the CP hopes to get a start in this direction. Admittedly, they don't expect to win, but promoting a Gus Hall/Angela Davis ticket, they expect to more than double their votes and, to quote Gus Hall, "Yes, we are interested in electoral power."

So this electoral strategy serves two purposes. Namely, it promotes illusions that you can peacefully vote in all kinds of progressive changes and even eventually communism, keeping all the government apparatuses of the capitalist class intact, that the armed seizure of power by the working class is unnecessary. And secondly, from the self-interest standpoint of the CP, it's a way to get a piece of the power to rule over the masses.

Angela Davis

In the '60s and early '70s, with the upsurge of revolutionary consciousness that characterized the Black liberation struggle and sections of the student and anti-war movement, the CP had to adopt a more revolutionary image to attract some of these people. Angela Davis and the struggle to free her, which for a time attracted people with some revolutionary aspirations, gave the CP the kind of image of pizzazz it needed then and brought some new people into its ranks.

But, it must be said that even in the early '70s Angela Davis was rotten to the core. For example, she and the CP did all kinds of double dealing, snitching and back-stabbing to get her the hell out of any kind of association with the heroic Marin County Courthouse escape attempt for which she and Ruchell Magee were standing trial. After all, "She's a Black woman professor!" Respectable people like that shouldn't and couldn't possibly be involved in such "crazed acts of desperation," they argued.

The CP was banking on some Black people still looking at Angela Davis as a symbol of revolution, or at least Black

liberation. They played this up for all it's worth in Detroit, making it seem like Davis was going to be the main speaker at the rally and focusing media coverage of the convention on her. Although most of the 500 or so people who came from Detroit (on top of about 1500 others) were there to hear Angela Davis, they were far fewer than the thousands that the CP had predicted. The Convention Hall had half its seats empty, showing that more people than the CP thought see where Angela Davis is really coming from. Davis spoke for a piddly 15 minutes, which angered those who came to hear her.

Despite her slightly more militant pose and "Save Dodge Main" T-Shirt (rather than a suit) she ran the same bread and butter line with a little bit of barbeque sauce added. Even as she spoke, her image dripped with bourgeois ooze. It was clear she felt that Black people wouldn't be interested in hearing anything about anything but the problems of their own nationality, so she talked about how plant shut-downs affected Blacks. She called Chrysler's layoffs "genocide against Black people." Despite the nationalist overtones, she reduced the whole question of national oppression to economic attacks on Black people, as if the most a Black person could want was a chance to be exploited like all the other workers.

It is clear that the CP sees Black people as another possible pressure group to add to its chorus of those demanding economic reforms. "Hundreds of thousands of Black people in the streets shouting 'No!' to layoffs would be a force they'd have to deal with," she said, and "This would force white workers to join in."

In other words, white workers would be too backward to get it together without Blacks taking the lead. There was nothing from this phony communist about the revolutionary unity of the working class and oppressed nationalities, or even about multi-national working class unity. At most, she talked about building unity among minorities, and even that was on a "I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine" level.

Davis gave away who she really sees as the leaders of Black people—Black bourgeois politicians like Andrew Young. "The ruling class says that Andrew Young and Black people don't have the right to stand up for the Palestinian people," she said, giving credence to the image of Young as a Black David standing up against a racist Goliath.

Towards the end of her rap, Davis showed the most valuable role that she can play for the CP, shoving Soviet social imperialism down the throats of Black people. "There *are* people of color who *do* have confidence," she said,

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glowing. "People like in Angola and in Ethiopia." (Neo-colonies of the Soviet Union). And she said, "The Soviet Union and Cuba are the two greatest friends of the people of the world fighting for liberation." The CP tries hard to dress up wolves in sheep's clothing. She ended her speech on the stirring note of begging people to join any one of the CP's many front organizations.

War and Peace and Serving Two Masters

The August 17th issue of the *Revolutionary Worker* pointed out that the most interesting thing at this convention would be how the CP would resolve their thorny predicament—the question of the fast approaching world war and how they were going to serve both opposing imperialist powers at the same time. Unfortunately, the CP basically dumped out on this issue at their public rally. It was a "no-show." They completely neglected to mention the possibility of war, much less characterize its feature or possible causes.

The closest they got to dealing with the U.S. vs. the Soviet Union, was in the speech from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), a CP front group. This speaker acknowledged that there was an arms race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and put forward SALT II as a step for "stopping" and reversing" the arms race.

In fact, their whole approach to the question of peace was reduced to SALT

II! This has become their public code-word for their "struggle for detente." They never really use the word "detente" as their big public slogan. This reflects the fact that the imperialist drive for war has heightened to the point where the detente smokescreen, the illusion of a more permanent framework for peace, is no longer credible, and the illusion of "putting on the brakes," as WILPF described SALT II, is the most they could sell to people.

Even the way they try to con people into fighting for SALT II reveals the CP's utter contempt for them. Here again, everything is reduced to an economic question—guns or butter. According to the WILPF, if the SALT II wonder-drug were administered, the capitalist economy would recover miraculously—no more inflation, everyone would have jobs, the cities would rise from the ashes and be reborn. Just lop a couple of hundred million off the military budget and start putting "human beings first." So, auto workers, if you want your job back, beg your local senator to sign SALT II!

One way the CP's pro-Soviet stand slipped out was by their constant portrayal of the Soviets as desiring peace and the U.S. as war-mongers. "The Soviets have agreed to a 25% reduction in nuclear stockpiles and the U.S. hasn't," scolded the WILPF speaker.

But even within the U.S. bourgeoisie, according to the CP, there are "good guys and bad guys," those who support SALT II and those who don't. At the rally the bad huys were just called "nuclear madmen" by Gus Hall. The CP called on the people to support pro-SALT II politicians and join with them to pressure the no-SALT bad guys into seeing the folly of their position.

This was another variation of the Kauskyite (a reformist masquerading as

a communist in Lenin's time) view that war is just a policy of the imperialists, or just a section of them, rather than an inevitable outgrowth of capitalism with its expand-or-die drive to maximize profits and its dog-eat-dog competition between capitalists of one country and internationally.

What the CP is working for, objectively, is for the U.S. to be ruled by bourgeois "good guys" who would make peace with the Soviet Union and together they would peacefully share in the exploitation of the whole world. In the short run, their pacifist movement could aid the Soviet Union if it actually has any effect on limiting the U.S. arms build-up. For the U.S. rulers, too, a pacifist movement is a safe alternative to a revolutionary one. So SALT II serves the CP well. It also serves both imperialists by hiding the nature and danger of war from the people.

Band-Aids for Cancer

The CP's convention mass-rally was a sickening example of the poison of revisionism. It could have been called "A thousand and one ways to patch up a terminally ill dinosaur" or "How to get your fair share under slavery." The two imperialists superpowers sinking deeper into the swamp of their unsolvable contradiction, which their crises reveal more sharply every day, are locked in a desperate battle over which one of them will lord it over the people of the world and they're both prepared to devour millions of lives in the contest. Only working class revolution can bring an end to the criminal system and lay the basis for a new world, not based on profit or exploitation of man by man. It is this great goal that all communists live and die for.

But at this so-called Communist Convention rally there was not one single

mention of revolution, no sense at all that capitalism would have to be overthrown to put a stop to the miseries it causes, not a whisper of the great historic mission of the working class to liberate itself and mankind.

To some extent, these phony communists, because of their thoroughly bourgeois, capitalist-aping ideology, don't even really understand the need for revolution. They don't see the profit-cancer that is capitalism much less that you can't treat it with band-aids.

Some of their ranks might suspect that real change can only come about through revolution. But they think the millions of people in this country and around the world are too dumb to figure it out. Like the head of the CP's youth group, the Young Workers Liberation League, told an *RW* reporter, "Youth don't want to hear about revolution, they just want jobs".

But more and more people are starting to put the lie to this slander. The hundreds of people who stalked out before the rally was over were a testament to the anger and disgust that many people have with attempts to reform and prolong their enslavement. And growing numbers of people, like them, are looking for *genuine* communist leadership to provide a line that can forge a revolutionary path out of capitalist hell.

A group of delegates in business suits were confronted in front of Cobo Hall by a construction worker, unknown to *RW* reporters. Laid off from Chrysler, he had been breaking pavement and lifting big chunks of cement. Knowing who these suited up system lovers were, he asked loudly, "Hey, what do you think of the Revolutionary Communist Party"? As their mouths dropped open, he shouted "I don't care what you say! They have a better idea!" ■