In politics, there are few things as dangerous as believing what you would like to believe for what really exists. It may produce a temporary burst of euphoria, whatever the manner or later the class struggle, and the class enemy—will force you back down to earth.

The most serious working class problem that leaps out at anyone who undertakes a serious examination of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). The CPUSA says that all things we’d all like to believe are true. According to its 23rd National Convention held last week in Cleveland (see accompanying article, page 3), the U.S. is in the midst of a “massively popular upsurge.” The “Basic Draft Committee” in “the system,” the country has a “76% peace majority,” the “trade union movement made its initial ‘major steps toward political independence’” and is on the “threshold of a period of offensives actions.” The working class is “more radical and militant.” Less, anti-imperialist, less class collaborationist and less racist. America has only ever five years ago and there is much more class and socialist consciousness out there than we are aware of. “CPUSA General Secretary Gus Hall envisions for us as far as we know that with ‘outstanding’ Ronald Reagan will be defeated in 1984.”

Unfortunately, politics is not the art of wish fulfillment. And this is why the CPUSA, for all its strengths (links to the international communist movement, strong class consciousness, and a political program that is essentially the working class movement through the immensely difficult period that lies ahead).

BASIC LINE

If the problem were only a bit of excess enthusiasm in the case of the class struggle, the CPUSA might be let off the hook with a minor criticism and a suggestion that the CPUSA works on its weaker points more carefully. Unfortunately, the source of the CPUSA's "official optimism" is rooted far more deeply in the structure of the CPUSA's program and analysis that guides the organization.

The CPUSA's errors begin precisely on the ground that the CPUSA regards as its greatest strength—its class analysis of U.S. society and the working class in particular. By the same Marxist-Leninist materialist fashion, the CPUSA views the U.S. working class as an essentially homogeneous and spontaneous growing ever more united because of the objective movement of capitalist class struggle. But for the just-completed national convention put it this way:

"Unfortunately, any serious plans to affect the course of the class struggle in the U.S. will require that the working class fight with the trade union movement, the consumer protest movement, etc. But, more importantly it must, in its immediate internal contradictions, divisions and struggles. Above all, this means taking into account the serious economic and racial struggles which have left the U.S. working class extremely divided and intensely split politically."

The other matter is that a significant layer of U.S. workers enjoy an array of economic advantages that make their active participation in life quite different from those of the more oppressed strata of workers in the U.S. As well as from their class brothers in the industrial centers around the world. This division between the upper and lower strata of the class—which is thoroughly racialized—provides the material basis for two main political trends to spontaneously arise within the U.S. proletariat. One, rooted in the more oppressed, disproportionately minority sector, is spontaneously pushed toward an advanced form of class struggle. But the other, appallingly white upper strata has the material basis for spontaneously producing astubborn conservatism. And this is precisely because all the political organizations during the revolutionary war and the perpetuation of racism.

And the political point at issue here is precisely that the present economic hardness abates but class consciousness still exists. The U.S. working class will not automatically eliminate this split, but actually serve to accentuate it. While some hard-hit workers are definitely moving leftward, far too many others attribute the causes of their woes to foreign competition and workers, fifteen years of "reverse discrimination" in favor of non-whites, and "Soviet-backed terrorism" around the world. In other words, the contradictory mass movements are rebuffing tendencies toward opportunism as well as class consciousness both become accelerated as the class struggle deepens.

The CPUSA regards such thinking as the most dangerous anti-Maoist and anti-socialist tendency, but will not condemn it, of regarding them of some of Lenin’s thoughts on the subject: "...certain groups of workers have already drifted away to opportunism and to the imperialist bourgeoisie. And that is the very fact the activists want to evade. They confine themselves to ‘official optimism’...objective conditions guarantee the unity of the working class to be molded into the revolutionary core of a broad cross-class alliance without any polarization with opportunism internal to its own ranks."

The responsibility of communist leadership is reduced to "helping" the working class pursue its own natural development toward unity, while being ever vigilant politically and tactically never to introduce "artificial" divisions that might disrupt this spontaneous course forward.

Surely the revolutionary path for the U.S. working class was so straight, smooth and easy as the CPUSA envisions, we would be in little need of a Leninist vanguard party! (Which helps account for why the Leninist fiber of the working class has so seriously deteriorated in recent years.) However, issuing platitudes about the inevitability of working class unity will not make the deep diviations disappear. It will only leave the advanced section of the U.S. working class tactically disarmed to mount the fierce struggle against the entrenched opportunists. The CPUSA’s policy is to dominate the political organizations of the working class. The task of communists must not be to oppose, but to highlight the demarcation between class resistance and opportunism, galvanize the energy of the most advanced forces, and organize the trade union movement. By doing so, communists lay the basis for uniting the broadest mass of U.S. workers in the only viable popular front struggle, the path to the revolutionary unity of the working class does not lie in smooching up to the imperialists, their allies, or the imperialists, their allies will be ideologically driven to split the already exists within the working class by, Lenin’s words, simply as “incessant, systematic, extensive and open struggle” against opportunism.

The most serious illustration of the direction the CPUSA has traveled from this Leninist course lies in the way the CPUSA poses the test before the trade union movement today. At a time when the AFL-CIO center remains tightly controlled by pro-imperialist forces who argue for tighter restrictions on immigrant workers, agitate for protectionist legislation, oppose strike action and yet by an open and unopposed" against opportunism.

Prospects

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