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In Defense of Leninist United Front Tactics

**On the backward turn
in the line of the international communist movement
at the Seventh Congress of the C.I. in 1935**

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International, which was held in July-August 1935. This Congress is probably the single most discussed congress of the C.I. Later this year it will undoubtedly be widely discussed by both Marxist-Leninists and revisionists.

The Seventh Congress is known mainly for its discussion of united front tactics. Since united front tactics are one of the most basic methods of work of revolutionary communist parties, it is natural that this question has received wide attention.

Today the issue of the united front comes up in discussion of the most immediate tasks facing class-conscious workers and revolutionary activists. A sharp debate has been in progress for some time. Is one following united front tactics when one works to unite the working masses against the capitalist parties, against both parties of the capitalist offensive, the Democrats and the Republicans, or do united front tactics require working for the election of some or most Democratic Party candidates? Do united front tactics put the class struggle in the fore, or do they amount to uniting with the liberal Democratic Reaganites against the conservative Republican Reaganites? Should there be a united front with the Democratic Party, the labor bureaucrats, and the bourgeois liberals, or should united front tactics be used to build up the independent movement of the working class?

The pro-Soviet revisionists, such as those of the CPUSA, and the pro-Chinese revisionists, such as those of the LRS, both oppose revolutionary agitation and both seek to subordinate the movement to

the liberal bourgeoisie. These revisionists, along with the Trotskyites and other opponents of Marxism-Leninism, are liquidators, who are working to stamp out the class independence of the proletariat. In this work, they have picked up the language of condemning revolutionary work as "ultra-left", as a "denial of united front tactics", as a failure to "utilize contradictions among the enemy", as work "in favor of Reagan", or whatever their particular pet phrase is. In particular, the liquidators have taken to using united front rhetoric to justify their opposition to the revolutionary class struggle and their subservience to the liberal bourgeoisie.

United Front Tactics — A Basic Feature of Marxist-Leninist Tactics

Hence it is important to study carefully the Leninist teachings on the united front and the experience of the Communist International. We must defend the Leninist united front tactics against the liquidators, who have stripped the heart and soul

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from united front tactics until there is nothing left but a fashionable phrase which they use to cover up the nakedness of their betrayal to the side of the bourgeoisie. We must examine closely the rich experience of the C.I. And such a study must eventually come up with the issue of evaluating the views on the united front given by the Seventh Congress.

Our Party has made use of united front tactics right from the time of the birth of our first direct predecessor, the American Communist Workers Movement (M-L), in 1969. Several years ago we began a special study of united front tactics in order to demonstrate the hollowness of the liquidationist rhetoric and also in order to systematize the theoretical basis of the tactics our Party uses, further develop the sense of revolutionary sweep and a broad perspective on the problems of the class struggle, and further develop our ability to apply our tactics to new problems and new situations. Some of this study has been published in The Workers' Advocate in the series of articles under the overall title "United front tactics are an essential tool of the proletarian party," which first appeared in Jan. 25, 1983.

Our study, as any careful study of the Leninist teachings on the united front would, soon revealed a contradiction concerning the Seventh Congress. The Seventh Congress is widely known as the Congress that brought united front tactics to the world com-

munist movement. Indeed, Dimitrov himself, in his well-known Report to the Seventh Congress, stressed that "Ours has been a Congress of a new tactical orientation for the Communist International." And there can be no doubt that this "new tactical orientation" for world communism was regarded as the wide and effective use of united front tactics.

The contradiction is, however, that united front tactics have always been a basic feature of Marxist-Leninist tactics. Marx and Engels made effective use of the united front tactics in their revolutionary work, including their participation in the German democratic revolution of 1848-49 and the work to build up the First International. The Bolshevik Party also made extensive use of such tactics for many purposes, including uniting the workers of Russia behind the communist stand despite the reformist obstruction of the Mensheviks.

And the CI also took up the use of united front tactics long before the Seventh Congress. The CI held that, in building communist parties in each country and eliminating social-democratic methods of work, it was essential to teach the parties how to win over the majority of the working masses to communism. The issue of united front tactics came up in essence at the Second Congress of the CI in 1920. And then it was the Third Congress in 1921 that explicitly set forth the militant slogan of "Build up a united proletarian front" and that devoted much of its time to thrashing out the basic principles underlying united front tactics, while the Fourth Congress in 1922 carried this discussion

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further and lay further stress on the call to apply united front tactics. It is at these Congresses of the CI, in 1921 and 1922, that various principles of Marxist-Leninist tactics are formulated as united front tactics and are set as the line for the world communist movement.

After these Congresses, the CI continued to devote continuous attention to the question of the united front. One of the focal points of the Fifth Congress of the CI in 1924 was the fight against rightist interpretations of united front tactics and of the slogan of "workers' government". Sharp debates took place on these questions. And the Sixth Congress in 1928, which dealt with a wide range of issues, also took up a number of questions of importance to united front tactics, including restressing the necessity to lay emphasis on the work among the rank-and-file workers as the heart of united front work; showing the necessity to fight against the

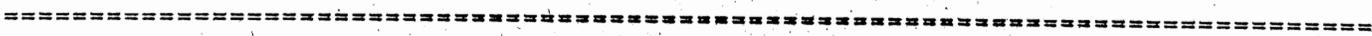
"left" social-democratic ideology; explaining the nature of the partial demands that should be put forward; analyzing the role of the national-reformist currents in the national liberation movement, and so forth.

Thus the CI was deeply involved in united front work, and was constantly discussing the issue of united front tactics and adjusting its united front work to ensure its revolutionary effectiveness, for well over a decade prior to the Seventh Congress.

How then has the Seventh Congress come to be known as the Congress that introduced united front tactics into the international communist movement? How could the use of united front tactics be described as a "new tactical orientation" for world communism? Why does Dimitrov, who himself refers back to some of the previous decisions of the CI on the united front, contrast the tactics of the Seventh Congress to the previous tactics of the

IN DEFENSE OF THE LENINIST TEACHINGS ON UNITED FRONT TACTICS

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communist parties?

The Seventh Congress— A Turn Away From Leninist United Front Tactics

In our view, the Seventh Congress of the CI actually did, just as Dimitrov said it did, introduce a new tactical orientation for world communism. But this orientation consisted in large part of abandoning the previous Leninist views on united front tactics and replacing them with profoundly erroneous tactics, tactics that harmed the anti-fascist struggle and that helped begin an opportunist corrosion inside the communist parties. It would still be the communist parties that were in the forefront of the fight against fascism in the rest of the 1930s and in World War II and that shed their blood to defeat the fascist offensive. It would still be a long time before the revisionist tragedy that destroyed the communist character of party after party; but the denigration of Leninist tactics at the Seventh Congress and afterwards would, in so far as various parties followed it, introduce harmful and even liquidationist practices into the communist movement.

The Seventh Congress was faced with the task of orienting the world communist movement with respect to the new situations arising in the struggle against the world fascist offensive. The revolutionary crisis that the CI had predicted had arrived, but it was taking an unexpected form. It was more and more taking the form of a big clash between the working masses and the forces of fascism, which served as the spearhead of the bourgeois drive to destroy socialism in the Soviet Union and revolution around the world. The working class movement faced grave dangers and needed to soberly discuss how to mobilize around it every bit of revolutionary energy of the working masses.

The Seventh Congress had at its disposal the results of over a decade of CI activity in forging the communist parties. The line of the first six congresses of the CI, from its founding in 1919 to the Sixth Congress in 1928, was both consistent and Marxist-Leninist. This was also true of "the Sixth Congress period" from 1928 to 1934, until a year or so before the Seventh Congress when the line began to change.

At the same time, in the period following the Sixth Congress, certain rigid views on certain tactical questions had appeared in the Executive Committee of the CI. This was not a question of gross errors, but of the approach to certain subtle tactical issues that had come up in implementing a correct stand. As the thirties wore on, some of these tactical questions became more and more pressing. One of the tasks of the Seventh Congress was to correct these rigidities and ensure that the communist tactics maintained the necessary flexibility.

The Seventh Congress however failed in these

tasks. It did not give a correct summation of the past experience of the communist movement. It threw aside the revolutionary orientation of the past as well as the emphasis on strengthening the communist parties. It did not correct the rigidities of the past period, but instead turned them on their head, drew rightist conclusions from them, and converted them into major dogmas.

The Seventh Congress, the Great Mass Struggles of the 1930s, and the Victory Over Fascism in World War II

The great mass struggles of the latter 1930s and the defeat of fascism in World War II have provided prestige and apparent validation to the new line of the Seventh Congress. However, those who have tried to win mass support and to grow rapidly by simply adopting the rightist prescriptions of the Seventh Congress have failed again and again.

This is because the great mass struggles of the 1930s arose because of the deep economic and political crises of the times, and because the communist parties had been organized and strengthened by years of previous work as part of the CI. The great mass struggles were part of the great clash between revolution and counterrevolution of the times. They began well prior to the Seventh Congress and the new line. As long as the world communist movement recognized the central role of the struggle against fascism and had a certain minimum of flexibility in its tactics, it was bound to find its rightful place at the head of these struggles.

These conditions for the mass mobilizations behind the communist parties — namely the great class clashes and the previous strengthening of the communist parties through protracted and persistent party-building — cannot be shortcut through adopting some rightist formulas. Indeed, a study of the struggle of the latter 1930s and World War II reveals that various parties lost the fruits of their struggle because of the flabbiness in their orientation and organization created in large part by following the new tactical orientation worked out at the Seventh Congress.

Our Party has great respect for the heroism, dedication and self-sacrifice of the great army of communists who fought perseveringly against the world fascist offensive. The history of this period shows that it was the working masses, spearheaded by the communist parties, that were the bulwark against fascism, while the bourgeoisie was the class that spawned and sympathized with fascism, that in country after country went over to fascism, that showed repeatedly that it preferred the worst fascist tyranny to the prospect of losing its sacred right to exploitation and plunder. It was the international working class movement, the liberation struggle of the oppressed nations and the deep sacrifices by the Soviet people that defeated fascism.

The history of the anti-fascist struggle shows that it is communism that can organize, mobilize and inspire the working class and unleash its revolutionary power, while reformism and opportunism, whether of the social-democratic brand or otherwise, is impotent and bankrupt before the great tasks of struggle.

But the successes of this period must not blind us to the setbacks that also occurred, nor must they prevent a sober assessment of the tactics and methods used at the time. The Seventh Congress was right to point to the central role of the world fascist offensive in world politics. In so far as it actually oriented the world's communists to this struggle, it was correct. But the 7th Congress did not just readjust communist tactics to the current world situation. It ushered in new orientations that denigrated the Leninist principles on one front after the other. These orientations were harmful then, were harmful subsequently, helped undermine the communist movement and leave it prey to subversion by revisionism, and are harmful today.

Introducing the Study of the Seventh Congress

What were the basic features of the new tactical orientation? Here we will simply present in outline form some of the conclusions we have come to about the new united front tactics of the Seventh Congress. This will be simply an introduction to the extensive materials that, starting with this issue of The Workers' Advocate Supplement, we will be publishing on the Seventh Congress, analyzing in detail the views it set forth and the actions taken to implement them.

The study of the Seventh Congress requires care as the reports at this Congress, such as Dimitrov's speech which was the main document promoted after the Congress and the main document still read from this Congress, are deceptive and demagogical. They interweave the new recommendations with disclaimers to the effect that the old views are being maintained. It is possible to quote all sorts of isolated statements from Dimitrov's speech that are basically right and that have nothing to do with the actual new tactics that Dimitrov was advocating. Thus it is particularly necessary to examine Dimitrov's speech and the other documents of the Seventh Congress as a whole and, especially, to compare them with the actual practice of the times in order to see what is window-dressing and what was meant seriously.

United Front Tactics — Before and After the Seventh Congress

Now we will proceed to list a few of the major changes in the way united front tactics were implemented before and after the Seventh Congress. Our aim in doing this is to help guide the study of this

Congress and focus attention on the basic issues at stake. A presentation of many of the basic Leninist ideas behind the former united front tactics of the CI may be found in the articles "To the Masses!"—The Call of the Third Congress of the CI", "The Third Congress of the CI on the Relationship of the Party and the Masses", "The Third Congress of the CI on the Reformist Parties as Diehard Defenders of Capitalism", and "The Third World Congress of the CI Opposed Rightist Interpretations of United Front Tactics" in the issues of The Workers' Advocate for March 1, 1983, July 1, 1983, August 15, 1983, and December 15, 1983.

**** Abandoning the Leninist Stand of Winning the Masses for Communism**

Winning the masses for communism was the very heart of united front tactics as set forth by the Third and Fourth Congresses of the CI. These united front tactics did not consist in having illusions in reformism and social-democracy, but in finding ways to bring the working masses into motion despite and against the obstruction of the reformists and social-democrats. United front tactics were aimed at bringing the masses into struggle; and it was held that the sharper the class struggle, the more the masses could be won over to communism. This did not mean that united front proposals were to be formulated with special provisions designed solely to ensure rejection by the opportunist leaders, as the liquidators claim when they ridicule the Marxist-Leninist conception of the united front, but that these proposals must provide for real action against the class enemy, not empty phrases. And the CI warned against the rightist, use of phrasemongering about the united front to hide liquidationist views and illusions about opportunism.

The Seventh Congress fought hard against this stand. Dimitrov argued in essence that united front tactics mean abandoning the revolutionary standpoint as something that could be postponed for the unspecified future. The idea was that militant workers are revolutionaries and communists for the distant future, but something else when dealing with the politics of the day. The whole spirit of Leninist united front tactics, that only communism could provide the basis for a fighting unity of the working class, was thrown aside as allegedly sectarianism, dogmatism, and the empty repetition of communist platitudes. This affected the views of the Seventh Congress on many different fronts, including the attitude to social-democracy, the methods to be used in the fight against fascism, and the stand towards party-building.

**** Defining Social-Democracy and Reformism as Progressive Forces**

Previously the united front tactics of the com-

unist parties were based on the profound conviction of the treachery of social-democracy and reformism. The very origin of the Communist International was in the struggle against the treachery of the social-democratic Second International, which had betrayed the workers in World War I by going over to the side of the bourgeoisie. The social-democrats had urged the workers to side with their own national bourgeoisie in massacring the working masses of other countries, and by this class collaboration with the capitalists and reactionaries, the social-democrats had split the working class. The CI came up to rally the working class for the class struggle, to break the working class free of the class collaboration policy of the social-democrats and reformists, and to unify the working class through this revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

The condemnation of social-democracy by the CI did not mean that it judged parties solely by their name or refused to deal with groups of social-democratic workers moving to the left. On the contrary, most of the original sections of the CI were left-wings of the social-democratic party of the countries concerned, and it was the task of the CI to convert them into genuine communist parties. And it was precisely during this period of relentless struggle against social-democracy that the CI guided the Communist Party of Germany in its successful winning over and merger with the bulk of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany (the Independents being originally a centrist split from the reformist Social-Democratic Party of Germany, with the Independents who refused to merge with the communists reforming their centrist party and then merging back with the reformists). However, the CI judged that the movement to the left of the social-democratic workers consisted in their abandoning social-democracy for class struggle, even if various groups of these left-leaning masses still bore the term "social-democratic" in their name in the initial stages.

The Seventh Congress, on the other hand, claimed that social-democracy had become progressive in the conditions of the 1930s. According to the Seventh Congress, the only hope for the working class to fight against fascism consisted in ensuring that the social-democratic parties and leaders gave up their class collaboration and took up struggle. Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress, flying in the face of the actual experience of the 1930s and of the struggle against fascism in various countries, theorized that the growing danger of fascism turned social-democracy into a pro-working class, progressive force. They closed their eyes to the experience of social-democracy and reformism serving the bourgeoisie heart and soul, the ongoing sabotage by the social-democrats and reformists of the struggle against fascism, and the many cases when they even sought to reach accommodation with the fascist movements and regimes; and they claimed that social-democracy was

no longer a bulwark of the bourgeoisie. Instead they theorized that since the fascists attack the social-democrats, the social-democrats must now be progressive and willing to fight, that since the economic crisis hits the workers hard, the aristocracy of labor must be turning to class struggle so that it could hardly still be said to exist as an "aristocracy of labor", etc. etc.

The "new tactical orientation" of the Seventh Congress was fully based on this view that the whole fate of the class struggle depended on whether social-democracy would turn to a policy of militant class struggle. It saw the crisis facing the social-democratic parties, with more and more rank-and-file workers in the social-democratic groups disgusted at the treachery of their parties, longing to throw themselves into the struggle against the fascist offensive, and interested in unity with the communists. But it surrendered any prospect that this mass movement would upset the social-democratic applecart and unite the working class behind class struggle, and instead claimed that this motion of the social-democratic rank-and-file meant that the social-democratic parties as a whole and all over the world were now progressive.

**** Abandoning the Emphasis on Mobilization of the Rank and File and Instead Subordinating Everything to the United Front From Above**

Previously the Communist International centered its tactics on the mobilization of the rank-and-file. United front agreements and appeals "from above", to the social-democratic parties and leaders or even to the Second International itself, were not ruled out. On the contrary, such appeals "from above" were essential, at the appropriate times, to be able to approach the masses at the base of the reformist parties. But they were to be used for the purpose of strengthening the work at the base.

The entire content of Leninist united front tactics hinged on consideration of the mood of the workers at the base, at finding the ways to get in touch with them and bring them into struggle. And whatever agreements from above were obtained were regarded as useless if the communist parties did not make immediate use of them to step up their contact with the workers at the base, to find ways to draw these workers into the mass struggle and to find methods of moving them closer to the standpoint of building revolutionary organization. It was firmly understood that even if the social-democratic and reformist leaders agreed to take certain actions, that in most cases they would undertake little action in practice, would seek to find ways to block their members from coming over to communism, and would back out of the agreements as soon as they felt they had cooled off the rank-and-file workers. (Naturally, individual leaders might abandon social-democracy and particular social-democratic groups

might move left and break free of social-democracy.)

At the Seventh Congress, the emphasis changed to obtaining agreements from above with the social-democratic party leaderships. In fact, it was essentially denied that a party was using united front tactics unless it had an all-encompassing agreement with the social-democratic party leaderships and reformist trade union bureaucrats, or else was in the process of subordinating everything to the negotiations to obtain such agreements. Instead of judging proposed agreements with the social-democrats on the basis of whether they in fact helped to bring the workers into sharper struggle against the bourgeoisie, the methods of struggle were to be subordinated to what was acceptable to the social-democrats. This introduced a tremendous pressure for one concession after another to the social-democrats, since these concessions were the only method the Seventh Congress had found to obtain agreements from the social-democratic parties. Much of the Seventh Congress is devoted to justifying such concessions to the social-democrats (and liberals) and putting a good face on them.

Such united front agreements from above were also regarded as something that could be durable and permanent. And the thought was completely abandoned that social-democratic workers or groups that moved left and took up struggle were in an unstable position, a position that must either lead them further to revolutionary stands and a break with social-democracy or must degenerate back into social-democratic sloth and collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

Of course, the Seventh Congress did not give up phrases about mobilizing the masses, and the new united front tactics were justified as providing the biggest ever mobilization of the rank-and-file. On the surface, the examples of large mass actions of the 1930s might appear to justify this stand.

But in fact the new views of the Seventh Congress placed the entire attention on accommodation with the social-democratic (and liberal) leaders. Any study of the actual mass actions of the time soon reveals that, in so far as the new tactics were applied, the mobilization of the rank-and-file was subordinated to the need to reach agreements with the reformists (and the liberals). The demands of the mass actions were subordinated to this end, the number and methods of the demonstrations were subordinated, and often the mass mobilizations were centered simply on electoral blocs. Even the existence of communist agitation and organization at the base was sacrificed to agreement with the social-democrats (and liberals), as can be seen in the elimination of communist trade union fractions and the substitution of liberal agitation for communist agitation.

**** Abandoning the Standpoint of Struggle on the Immediate Issues In Favor of Highflown, Empty Words about the Immediate Issues**

Previously united front tactics were designed to rally the workers around the burning, immediate issues of the class struggle. The united front appeals were to rally the workers around struggle against the bourgeoisie. The CI held that the conflict between communism and reformism was not just or mainly over the form of the future insurrection, but was an all-sided struggle on all the questions of the immediate struggle. It held that the main issue was that the reformists and social-democrats pursued a policy of class-collaboration and treachery on all fronts of the class struggle, while the communists pursued the policy of class struggle.

The Seventh Congress changed this stand. It held that by shelving the revolution, the communists could come to terms with the social-democrats and reformists, who allegedly did fight on the immediate issue. Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress swore up and down about the immediate issues of the struggle, but this was for the sake of justifying such stands as abandoning the revolutionary standpoint and downplaying socialist agitation as allegedly necessary to carry forward the immediate struggle.

In so far as the immediate struggle is divorced from revolutionary work and subordinated to what is acceptable to the social-democratic reformists, it turns into an empty shell, into words about struggle rather than struggle, into fine phrases to create the impression that something is being done, while politics as usual rules the roost.

For example, the Seventh Congress raised the need to purge fascists from the French Army, and then identified this task with the talk of liberal parliamentarians about the alleged loyalty of the French Army to democracy. It analyzed the coming world war, and replaced the tasks of anti-war struggle with pacifist agitation and "peace" as the central slogan. It substituted high-sounding joint declarations to actual mass struggle. It showed a strong tendency to lay stress on parliamentarianism and referendums, even useless pacifist referendums on whether the masses wanted peace in general. And it ushered in the practice of advocating that the mass struggle should be held in check in order to preserve the alliances necessary to fight fascism, rather than intensified to provide a real struggle against fascism.

**** Whitewashing the Bourgeois Liberals**

Previously united front tactics were designed to accentuate the class confrontation between the working class and the bourgeoisie. It was an appeal to the class solidarity of the working class. Without neglecting the differences between the bourgeois liberals and the bourgeois reaction, the communist

parties sought to rally the workers as an independent force, separate from and opposed to all bourgeois parties. And the communist parties sought to rally the rest of the working masses around the working class through winning them over from the influence of the bourgeoisie. Thus the communist parties exposed the treachery of the bourgeois liberals, their participation and even leadership of the bourgeois campaigns against the working masses, and their role in facilitating the rise of reaction.

The Seventh Congress however held that the bourgeois liberals, as well as the social-democrats, were to be whitewashed as anti-fascist fighters. The parties of the liberal bourgeoisie were misrepresented as peasant or urban petty-bourgeois parties; and just as the proletarian united front was regarded by the Seventh Congress as essentially identical with accommodation with social-democracy, the term "popular front", or alliance of the working masses, was misused as a euphemism for alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. Thus Dimitrov's stress on the need for the popular front was actually an appeal for the need for unity with the bourgeois liberals at all costs.

This view of the liberals went totally against the experience of the 1920's and 1930's concerning the role of the liberal bourgeoisie in the rise of fascism. And to pursue the liberals required that the class struggle be downplayed, various demands of the working class and peasantry be laid aside, the militant mass struggle be calmed, and so forth.

**** Liquidationist Tendencies on the Question of Party-Building**

Previously, the CI gave tremendous attention to the task of party-building. And it advocated that the strengthening of the communist party was essential for successful united front tactics. The party had to be parties of action, active in the political and economic struggles of the working class. The organizations of the party, from the top to the bottom, had to be extremely sensitive to the mood of the masses and clear and resolute on the orientation to be given to the mass struggle in order to utilize united front appeals correctly.

The CI held that the correct use of united front tactics required that the communist parties organize themselves as proletarian revolutionary parties of the new type; they had to eliminate the social-democratic methods of organization carried over from former days. The social-democratic style of party organization had a passive mass at the bottom directed by a bureaucratic and detached center. Effective central organs had to be built up, capable of providing firm centralist leadership in close connection with the working masses and all the party organizations. Inner-party democracy that aroused the initiative of all party members had to be developed; this combining of centralism and democracy in

democratic centralism could not be obtained by mere formal centralism or formal democracy. The communist organizations at the base had to be active among the masses, and each communist had to take full part in revolutionary work, in order to make the words about mobilizing the rank-and-file workers under social-democratic influence into a reality, rather than simply nice-sounding rhetoric. And the party had to intervene in all major political and economic issues, and not adopt the social-democratic manner of surrendering the economic issues to the trade union bureaucrats and the political issues to the parliamentary group.

The Seventh Congress, on the contrary, downplayed the role of communist party-building in the name of the fight against sectarianism. The spirit of Dimitrov's remarks on party-building is to reduce all problems simply to the existence of sectarianism.

Connected to its denigration of party-building, was the Seventh Congress' liquidationist willingness to sell off the communist organization and political stand piece by piece in order to satisfy the social-democrats and reformists. The most open example of this is Dimitrov's announcement that the communists will agree to renounce communist party fractions in the trade unions in the name of unity with the social-democrats. These fractions were crucial for ensuring the ability of the party to deal with the economic issue and to ensure contact with the masses of rank-and-file workers in the trade unions. Yet the Seventh Congress casually tossed them aside, made no suggestions for anything to take their place, and in fact agreed in principle to the hypothetical reformist demand that party politics be kept out of the trade unions.

In fact, the Seventh Congress linked its new tactics on the question of the united front with the liquidationist plan of merging the communist parties and social-democratic parties in all countries around the world, and it held that this could be accomplished very soon. It also began the process of dismantling the CI apparatus. We will deal with both these points separately a little further on.

A Turn in the General Line of the International Communist Movement

These views of the Seventh Congress on the united front did not affect just one front of work of the communist movement. Instead they were inseparably connected with changes in one front after another of the work of the parties; they affected communist agitation, the method of approach to political events, the methods of organization, and the general perspective. Indeed, in order to implement the new tactics, which required comprehensive agreements from above with the social-democrats and liberals at all costs, such changes were unavoidable. We have already outlined some of these changes in passing in describing the Seventh Congress' views on the united

front itself, and now we will list some additional areas in which changes were made.

**** Abandoning the Revolutionary Struggle for the Liberation of the Colonies**

Previously the CI had laid great stress on mobilizing the workers of the advanced capitalist countries in support of the liberation movement in the colonies. Indeed, the famous 21 Terms of Admission to the CI, passed by the Second Congress, included a term devoted entirely to this point. Point #8 stated that "Parties in countries whose bourgeoisie possess colonies and oppress other nations must pursue a most well-defined and clear-cut policy in respect of colonies and oppressed nations. Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its 'own' country, must support -- in deed, not merely in word -- every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its com-patriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples." Through this and other means, the CI linked the world working class movement with the revolutionary movement in the colonies into a single revolutionary front.

The Seventh Congress downplayed this stand. It is notable that Dimitrov, in giving conditions for forming united parties of the proletariat, leaves out opposition to the colonial policy of "one's own" bourgeoisie. It is notable that after the Seventh Congress various European parties downplayed this question. For example, the French Communist Party, taken as a model at the Seventh Congress, in practice replaces support for the revolutionary movement in the French colonies, such as Vietnam and those in Africa, with the advocacy of mild reforms. The Spanish CP similarly puts on the shelf support for the self-determination of Spanish Morocco. Yet Morocco was a tremendous issue in Spain due both to the tremendous exertions the Spanish bourgeoisie had just made in brutally suppressing the Moroccan people and to the need to agitate among the Moroccan soldiers who had been forced into Franco's fascist army.

But there was no way that vigorous support for the struggle of the oppressed people in the colonies could be carried out without upsetting the applecart of agreements with the social-democrats and liberals. Self-determination for the colonies was being sacrificed on the altar of the united front from above with the social-democrats and liberal bourgeois.

Meanwhile, with respect to work in the colonies themselves, the Seventh Congress applied its views

on the united front to mean reconciliation with the national-reformist forces. Previously the CI had held that the national-reformist movement was an opportunist movement, subject to great vacillations as it balanced between imperialism and revolution. But the Seventh Congress gave no tasks for communism with respect to national-reformism other than support for this movement and integration into its activities. For example, in India, after the Seventh Congress, the Communist Party dropped its struggle against the treachery of the Indian National Congress and enthusiastically supported it.

**** Replacing the Leninist Orientation for the Anti-War Struggle with Pacifist Agitation**

Previously the CI linked the struggle against imperialist war with the building of the revolutionary movement. It showed that only revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie, not the pious reiteration by the bourgeois liberals and pacifists of their love for peace and harmony among nations, was of value in the struggle against war.

The Seventh Congress reversed this stand. It divorced agitation on the questions of war and peace from the issue of revolution; instead it enthroned simply "peace" as the main slogan in the fight against imperialist war. Although the Seventh Congress knew that World War II was coming and even discussed the outlines of the coming war, it recommended agitation on peace in general and put forward the perspective that such agitation could avert the coming world war. It waxed enthusiastic about the eleven million people in Britain who voted for the "peace ballot" organized by an organization called The Friends of the League of Nations, and put this forward as a model of anti-war work, despite the fact that this ballot did not deal with the causes of war, did not say who was responsible for the current war threats, was based on illusions in the League of Nations, did not mobilize anyone to rise in any form of struggle against the imperialists, and only signified that the people longed for peace.

**** Creating Illusions in the Bourgeois-Democratic Imperialist Powers**

The Seventh Congress correctly noted the special role of fascist Germany and Japan in the drive for the coming war and that the bourgeois states might divide among themselves and that the revolutionary forces might utilize this. But instead of a sober discussion of what this entailed, the Seventh Congress created illusions in the bourgeois-democratic imperialist powers. It whitewashed such powers as interested, for the time being, in the preservation of peace, although this was neither the general aim of the policy of the bourgeois-democratic imperialist powers nor the particular aim, which was to use the fascist states as a tool to smash the revolu-

tionary movement. It denounced the very thought that mutual security pacts of the Soviet Union with the bourgeois-democratic imperialist powers could be regarded as a compromise forced by circumstances, and instead glorified them in exalted terms, and displayed tremendous naivety over their effects. (And this despite the fact that Seventh Congress had to deal with the fact that the French imperialists had extracted from the Soviet Union, as part of the price for the mutual security pact, a statement in the joint communiqué that "In this connection Mr. Stalin understands and fully approves the national defence policy carried out by France in order to maintain its armed forces at a level that will ensure its security.")

The illusions in the bourgeois-democratic imperialist powers was connected to the pacifist agitation. For example, there was the rhetoric about certain powers being interested in peace. And there was the search of Soviet diplomacy for a joint definition with various countries of what aggression in the abstract was. The pacifist agitation was in fact connected to not just utilizing diplomacy, but centering the attention of the communist movement on diplomacy among the great powers.

At the end of World War II, illusions in American and British imperialism had the tragic effect of undermining the struggle in a number of countries where the communist party or the resistance movement lacked vigilance with respect to, or even welcomed, Allied armies and then found that these armies turned on them and installed reactionary, pro-Western regimes. These parties and resistance movements then were faced with either capitulating altogether or fighting in far more unfavorable conditions than if they had been properly vigilant at the start. These tragic illusions were related to the line propagated by the Seventh Congress, which confused utilization of contradictions among the imperialist powers with whitewashing the motives of one section of these powers.

**** Hiding the Class Struggle**

Previously the CI put the class struggle in the fore. The Seventh Congress downplayed the class struggle in its advice for agitation and propaganda. For example, in dealing with fascist demagogy, the Seventh Congress laid great stress on the communists themselves raising nationalist themes and pandering to petty-bourgeois prejudices. It is notable that it avoided the issue of socialism to the point that it had little to say about the Nazi demagogy that their reactionary regime, drenched with the blood of the class-conscious workers, was "socialist".

It was also notable that Dimitrov failed to deal with the anti-semitism of the fascists. At the Seventh Congress, only the German communist Florin raised the issue of the struggle against anti-semitism, when he briefly refers to the struggle of the

German communists against anti-Jewish pogroms (according to the Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings that was published in Moscow in 1939). Part of the reason that the Seventh Congress avoided this issue may be that effectively fighting anti-semitism required raising class issues, not the general love of humanity and brotherhood: anti-semitism in Europe was being used by the bourgeoisie to deflect the anger of the masses at capitalist exploitation away from the capitalist exploiters to the Jewish people, for which reason anti-semitism was sometimes called "the socialism of fools".

Part of the hiding of the class struggle was the glorification of democracy in general. The communist criticism of bourgeois democracy as the veiled rule of the bourgeoisie is set aside as something for the future. This is alleged to be required by the struggle against fascist takeover and for democratic rights, although the communists had for years fought against reaction and fascism while maintaining their criticism of bourgeois democracy.

**** A Liquidationist Perspective of Worldwide Merger with Social-Democracy**

Previously the CI held that the unity of the proletariat would be reestablished on the basis of communism, on the basis of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. This, indeed, was the reason why the CI had been founded.

The Seventh Congress, on the contrary, held that the time had ripened for an immediate end to the split between communism and social-democracy. It called for direct mergers between the communist and social-democratic parties. The new parties to be formed were described in terms quite different from that formerly used for the communist parties. And this process was to take place in every country and rather soon. The speed with which this was to happen can be imagined by the fact that Dimitrov feels compelled to warn the communists that some social-democratic parties may yet exist as independent parties for a while.

Previously the CI had merged different groups that had taken up the class struggle and support for communism into the communist parties. The new united parties were to carry out revolutionary struggle and the organizational methods of Marxism-Leninism just as the other communist parties did. This merger was inseparable from a difficult and protracted struggle against the survival of social-democratic ideas and traditions of organization among new communists from social-democratic backgrounds.

The Seventh Congress, however, put forth the plan of forming united parties on some sort of program that smoothed out the differences between communism and social-democracy. It abandoned the struggle against social-democratic traditions and ridiculed as sectarianism any worries about how to handle the

influx of newly-radicalized former social-democratic workers into the communist parties. It opposed the creation of new splits in the social-democratic parties since it was so firmly convinced of the imminent merger of communism with the entire social-democratic parties, rank-and-file* and leadership included.

The Seventh CI also denounced the idea of separating the social-democracy workers from the reformist leaders as overestimating the revolutionization of the masses. Yet it held to a fantasy about the revolutionization of the social-democratic parties as a whole and held that world social-democracy as a whole was ripe for merger with communism.

This was nothing but a liquidationist concept. In the crisis of the 1930's, many former social-democratic workers were becoming radicalized and going over to communism. This was particularly happening as the social-democratic parties and their traditional leadership were proving bankrupt in the face of the sharpening clash between the working class and the bourgeoisie. This undoubtedly created conditions for certain groups of social-democrats, as well as individuals, breaking free of the reformist leaders and going over to communism and called every effort to find ways to facilitate this. But the plan laid down by the Seventh Congress consisted of unity through eliminating the work to build proletarian parties of the new, Leninist type, through keeping the social-democratic parties together as one piece, and through uniting with social-democracy as a whole.

**** Beginning the Liquidation of the CI Apparatus**

The process of dissolving the CI began at the Seventh Congress.

The Seventh Congress presented this as simply an adjustment in the methods of work of the CI and the elimination of some bothersome overcentralization. It is quite likely that the CI apparatus did require an adjustment in its methods of work and organization, an adjustment based on summing up its successes and its setbacks. But this is not what the Seventh Congress did. Instead, following the Seventh Congress there was a gradual process of dismantling of the CI. The CI apparatus had not been restricted to just dealing with a handful of leaders, but through congresses, journals and wide discussions it had worked to mobilize the whole mass of communists, from the rank-and-file militant to the Central Committee member. This was increasingly replaced with behind-the-scenes maneuvering.

The journals of the CI were gradually published less and less, and their contents changed. As well, there were no more congresses nor plenary meetings of the Executive Committee of the CI. By 1943, when the CI was officially dissolved, there was hardly much left of it all, and there was no consideration given to replacing it with another form of world

communist organization. (The Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform, was established four years later in 1947 but only embraced a small handful of parties.)

The Experience of the Anti-Fascist Struggle Refutes the Views of the Seventh Congress

The "new tactical orientation" of the Seventh Congress was put forward as the way to fight fascism, but the experience of the struggle in the latter 1930's and in World War II refuted its theses and confirmed the revolutionary stand of Marxism-Leninism.

The central view of the Seventh Congress was that social-democracy had become progressive. It held that the working masses could force the social-democrats to become militant participants in the anti-fascist united front and that the social-democratic parties were ripe to merge with the communist parties.

**** The Liquidationist Plan for Merger with Social-Democracy Proved to Be An Utter Fantasy**

The worldwide merger of social-democracy and communism proved to be an opportunist fantasy. The majority of social-democratic leaders and parties continued their diehard struggle against communism. Faced with the intense desire of rank-and-file social-democrats for an end to class collaboration and for unity with communism, the social-democratic leaders simply marked time and waited for a suitable pretext to go on the offensive against communism, which they found in the Moscow trials of 1937 and 1938 against the degenerate Trotskyite and Bukharinite leaders.

There were some mergers with social-democratic parties or groups, and with certain social-democratic youth leagues, but these social-democrats were going against the international line of social-democracy in so doing. And these examples were never summed up internationally to see how they came about and what the results of the mergers were.

It should be stressed that during this period of the anti-fascist struggle social-democracy and liberalism were indeed in crisis, and the working masses under the influence of these trends were becoming radicalized. This called for energetic united front attempts to help win these toilers to the revolutionary struggle, and the possibility existed that not just individual toilers, but whole groups of formerly social-democratic and liberal toilers would go over to the path of struggle. But the experience of how this took place verified not the "new" orientations given at the Seventh Congress, but the previous Leninist conceptions.

**** The Social-Democratic and Liberal Leaders Continued to Fear Class Struggle More than Fascism**

The view of the Seventh Congress that the social-democratic and bourgeois liberal leaders were militant anti-fascist fighters -- or would be if the working masses simply applied a little pressure -- fared no better. Experience showed that social-democracy retained its role as a bulwark of the bourgeoisie, and along with the liberals it continued its practice of fearing the class struggle of the working masses more than the torments of reaction. It was not social-democracy and liberalism, but the communist parties and the working masses that bore the brunt of the struggle against fascism.

The French example was the model for the Seventh Congress. And following the Seventh Congress, the electing of a Popular Front government in France was one of the showpieces of the new orientation.

But the French Popular Front governments failed to implement the social reforms it itself was pledged to, failed to purge the French armed forces and bureaucracy of fascists, failed to support the anti-fascist struggle internationally (and, in particular, stabbed the anti-fascist fighters in Spain in the back during the Civil War), and failed to raise the militancy of the masses. The various Popular Front governments progressively moved to the right and finally collapsed, throwing France back into the arms of a liberal-center coalition government on the eve of World War II, a government which, at the outbreak of World War II, banned the communist press and arrested activists, dismissed municipal councils with a communist majority, and displayed the iron fist against the working masses, while it left France open to the German blitzkrieg.

The French social-democratic and liberal leaders were not militant anti-fascists. Not only did the social-democratic class collaboration and the liberal championship of capitalism pull the Popular Front governments down, but prominent liberals and social-democrats entered the service of the fascist pro-Nazi puppet government of France that was set up in part of France after France fell (the other part of France was directly administered by Germany). The social-democratic party went into crisis under the weight of its capitulation to fascism, and it was only gradually reorganized by social-democrats who wished to resist fascism, albeit in the reformist fashion.

The communist resistance was the largest resistance movement in France, the one that bore the brunt of the struggle. There were reformist and bourgeois resistance movements, and it was necessary for the communists to take account of them, and not lump them with the occupationists; it was particularly necessary to find a way to promote unity in action with the rank-and-file resistance fighter from the working masses who was under the influence of other trends. But the bourgeois resistance made

little secret of its aim of restoring French imperialism, as its choice of De Gaulle as a leader showed, while the leadership of the social-democratic party also sought to keep the struggle of the masses within narrow limits. The tactics carried over from the Seventh Congress harmed the vigilance of the French communists.

**** The Albanian Experience in the Anti-Fascist War Also Refutes the Seventh Congress**

In Albania, the communists led the anti-fascist national liberation war against the Italian and German fascist occupiers. This was a heroic struggle which not only defeated the fascists but was carried forward to a social revolution. The experience of this war and the subsequent social revolution also refute the views of the Seventh Congress. Comrade Enver Hoxha, who passed away only this month, was the leader of the Albanian communists and one of the giants of the world communist movement. His work and action in the anti-fascist war went against the prescriptions of the Seventh Congress on one issue after another despite his own belief that he was implementing the views of this Congress.

Thus Albania was liberated through the construction of a fighting united front of the masses although it proved impossible to obtain a united front agreement with the Albanian bourgeois nationalists and social-democrats (in Albania, the bourgeois nationalists were the main anti-communist force among the masses). Indeed Comrade Enver and the Albanian communists tore up the sell-out Mukje agreement of August 1943 with the bourgeois nationalists. The Albanian communists were not against agreement in principle and had striven hard to bring all groups into the liberation struggle. But they were not for an agreement at the cost of the struggle. Contrary to the views of the Seventh Congress, not united front from above with the reformists and bourgeois nationalists, but a direct united front of the toilers and anti-fascist militants was the salvation of Albania.

Similarly, the Albanian communists went resolutely against the orientation of building the united front on the basis of nice-sounding phrases in joint declarations. They insisted on building the united front on the basis of the burning task of the times, on the basis of insisting on armed struggle against the occupier.

They also did not sell off the communist party to the opportunists. As Comrade Enver stressed in his many writings on the anti-fascist war, in this struggle the Albanian communists never surrendered the leading role of the party and the work to build it up.

And the Albanian communists had no illusions about the role of the American and British armies in the war, and they succeeded in keeping the Western imperialists from intervening and setting up the

domestic bourgeoisie in power.

It is the example of what the Albanian communists actually did, and not their wrong conception of the line of the Seventh Congress, that must be the decisive factor in evaluating the Albanian experience. It may be noted, however, that although the belief of the Albanian communists in the value of the Seventh Congress didn't prevent them from contradicting the Seventh Congress in practice, it has been a factor that has contributed to their difficulty in applying their revolutionary experience to the present problems of the world Marxist-Leninist movement. It has been one of the sources of the present errors in the policy of the Party of Labor of Albania, errors that we have discussed in The Workers' Advocate of March 20, 1984 whose lead article is entitled "Our Differences with the Party of Labor of Albania".

The world communist movement, through its struggle and its bloodshed, through its rallying of the working masses and through its numerous martyrs, led the smashing of the fascist offensive that culminated in World War II. Insofar as the Seventh Congress substituted what Dimitrov called "a new tactical orientation" for the Leninist principles of the united front, it hurt the struggle. It was one of the reasons why many parties were unable to effectively fight against the fruits of the defeat of fascism being snatched by the Western bourgeoisie from the hands of the working masses. The influence of the Seventh Congress helped undermine and weaken the communist parties.

The Seventh Congress Provided the Soil for the Mistakes That Appeared After World War II

The "new tactical orientation" from the Seventh Congress was originally promoted as the method of fighting fascism. In fact, it was not applied simply to the period of the late 1930s and World War II, when the fascist offensive on a world scale confronted the working class movement. It was not retracted after World War II. On the contrary, it was one of the foundations for the various wrong orientations that became fashionable in the world communist movement in the period following World War II.

In The Workers' Advocate for May 1, 1984, entitled "In Defense of Marxism-Leninism/On Problems in the Orientation of the International Communist Movement in the Period from the End of World War II to the Death of Stalin", there is a description of the post-World War II period. Through examining the documents of the Cominform, the statements of Stalin and other major Soviet leaders, and the practice of various of the communist parties during that period, a picture is drawn of the problems that afflicted the world communist movement of that time and the effect these problems had in undermining the movement and leaving it prey to the tragedy of Khrush-

chovite revisionism in the mid-1950s.

An examination of the wrong orientations of the post-World War II period shows the close relationship to the "new tactical orientation" of the Seventh Congress. True, the post-World War II orientations were not a simple carbon copy of the Seventh Congress. For one thing, they had to adapt the new tactics to the world situation that arose after World War II. But the post-World War II views clearly build on the foundation of the Seventh Congress.

We pointed out that one of the main features of the problems that afflicted the world communist movement after World War II was a wrong orientation with regard to the struggle against social-democracy and opportunism. The consistent and principled struggle against social-democracy was replaced with repeated attempts to come to accommodation with social-democracy (to say nothing of the middle bourgeoisie, the priesthood, etc.) This clearly demonstrated a refusal to sum up the experience of the struggle against fascism, and it was a continuation of the stands of the Seventh Congress.

We showed that there was a wrong orientation in the struggle against imperialist war. This struggle had brilliant possibilities in the post-World War II period, and it could have been used quite effectively to build up the revolutionary movement. But instead the orientation was adopted of detaching the anti-war struggle from the class struggle, the socialist revolution, the national liberation movement or any other social content. The wrong orientation found concentrated expression in the pacifist policy of the World Peace Congress, the building of which was a major project of the world communist movement at that time.

This separation of the anti-war struggle from the revolutionary movement is completely in line with the pacifist agitation recommended at the Seventh Congress. Even the arguments from the post-World War II period suggesting that revolutionary Leninism no longer applied because of the changes in the world situation since World War I were the same as those used at the Seventh Congress.

We pointed to the astonishing lack of interest in the national liberation movement and other revolutionary struggles of the people of the oppressed countries in Cominform statements, Soviet statements and in the work of the World Peace Congress. The "Eurocentric" attitude of the Cominform and the backward attitude of the CP of France on the national liberation wars in Vietnam and Algeria is utterly reminiscent of the stand of the Communist Parties of France and Spain after the Seventh Congress of abandoning support for the liberation struggle of the colonies.

On these and other questions, the similarity of the two periods is evident. It is the Seventh Congress that opened the door to these errors and to the process of replacing revolutionary Marxism-

Leninism by something else. In so doing, it was one of the factors undermining the world communist movement, corrupting it and leaving it prey to the tragedy of revisionist takeover, which destroyed so many parties in the mid-1950s. It shows that if we wish to fight revisionism and build up a strong international Marxist-Leninist movement, we not only cannot rely on the mistaken traditions of the post-World War II period, we also cannot rely on the stands of the Seventh Congress. We must instead uphold the revolutionary communist stands of Marxism-Leninism.

The Seventh Congress and the Corruption of the CPUSA by Browderism

One of the striking examples of the undermining of a communist party by the Seventh Congress is the corrosion of the Communist Party of the USA by Browderite revisionism.

The CPUSA was once a revolutionary communist party that fought hard against the American bourgeoisie. It went through a difficult and protracted process of overcoming social-democratic traditions and taking up communist methods of work. It tirelessly organized the working class, led a number of fierce struggles against the exploiters, championed the cause of the unemployed, took up the fight for the liberation of the black people and other oppressed nationalities, vigorously fought U.S. imperialism and constantly strove to develop a strong revolutionary movement in the U.S.

But in the mid-1930s, the CPUSA suddenly changed its line. Throughout the latter 1930s, under the leadership of Earl Browder, it step by step began to drop its revolutionary features and to hitch itself to the tail of the liberal bourgeoisie. It toned down its struggle against Roosevelt and the union bureaucrats and eventually took up the stand of being the left-wing of the liberal-labor Roosevelt coalition. It abandoned its attempt to build up a revolutionary center of the black liberation struggle separate from the black bourgeoisie. It liquidated its trade union fractions and shop newspapers.

Browder continually redefined the united front and the popular front on a "broader and broader" basis, beginning with a section of the labor bureaucrats and the "left" wing of the Democratic Party, and later including the whole labor bureaucracy, the liberals of both the Democratic and Republican parties, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities, etc. By World War II he was extending his hand even to the National Association of Manufacturers and the billionaire J.P. Morgan himself.

In this process, Browder never received any rebukes from the CI. It was not until the very end of this process, after Browder had liquidated the CPUSA altogether, converting it in 1944 into the "Communist Political Association", that Browder received any criticism in the world communist movement; it

was in April 1945 that Jacques Duclos, a major leader of the Communist Party of France, wrote his famous article denouncing the liquidation of the CPUSA and certain of Browder's theses as "a notorious revision of Marxism".

The reason for the acceptance of Browder's actions in the international movement and one of the basic reasons behind the sharp change in the orientation of the CPUSA that began in the mid-1930's is clarified by the study of the Seventh Congress. It is clear that the change in the line of the CPUSA coincides with the taking up of the "new tactical orientation" that was formalized at the Seventh Congress of the CI. Various of the particular features of Browderism were even taken directly from Dimitrov's Seventh Congress report, such as the liquidation of the trade union fractions, the friendly attitude to Roosevelt, and the accommodation with the reformists, labor bureaucrats and liberal bourgeoisie in the name of a broader and broader united front or popular front.

The change in the line of the CPUSA is also due to domestic factors and causes internal to the CPUSA. There was a great deal of stress on the Party as it carried out revolutionary work in the midst of the Great Depression. It faced repression from the bourgeoisie. It faced complex problems when it led various militant strikes in the early years of the depressions but was unable to register a corresponding growth in its organization in those sectors of the workers. It had internal organizational problems. It would have required a determined stand to maintain its communist line and adapt it as necessary to the circumstance.

The CPUSA might have surmounted these factors. And, as a result of their revolutionary work, they were in good position to benefit from the further development of the mass upsurge of the 1930s. But the Seventh Congress added further pressure on the Party to abandon its line, rather than reinforcing their revolutionary determination as the CI had in the past. And thus it turned out that the Seventh Congress served as a catalyst to unleash the negative forces inside the CPUSA. The influence of the Seventh Congress had a powerful effect in undermining and corroding the party.

Beginning in 1945 a struggle developed in the CPUSA against Browder. Led by William Z. Foster, the American communists reconstituted the CPUSA, stripped Browder of all leading positions (and eventually expelled him from the Party for factional activity), and took up the question of rectifying the methods of struggle and organization of the CPUSA.

But, as we saw in the article "The CPUSA's Liberal-Labor Approach to the Critique of Browder" (in the May 1, 1984 issue of The Workers Advocate on the post-World War II situation in the international communist movement), the repudiation of Browder by Foster and Duclos did not bring the CPUSA back to

sound Marxist-Leninist positions. Instead, although Browder was denounced for his most extreme liquidationist positions and his most outlandish, rightist statements about the utopia that U.S. capitalism would bring the world and the class peace and class collaboration that was on the agenda, the basic features of the liberal-labor approach that Browder had been advocating and implementing in the Party were left untouched. Foster argued that, despite certain mistakes, the basic line of the party had been correct until May, 1942, when Browder was released from a trumped-up jail sentence.

The half-heartedness of the repudiation of Browderism by the CPUSA was further elaborated in the article "Why the CPUSA didn't resist Khrushchovite revisionism" in the June 10, 1984 issue of The Workers' Advocate. This article examined the activity of the CPUSA from the repudiation of Browder to its collapse into Khrushchovite revisionism in the 1950's. It showed the liberal-labor stands of the CPUSA in the post-World War II period, and it connected these stands to the inability of the CPUSA to resist the Khrushchovite revisionist offensive.

It is clear that one factor inhibiting the CPUSA from delving further into the criticism of Browder was its desire to stay within the bounds of the Seventh Congress. It was implicitly recognized by Foster that the overall stands of the CPUSA in the late 1930s were basically in line with the orientation fostered by the Seventh World Congress and that only Browder's later liquidation of the party and other more extreme stands were going too far. (Indeed, it is notable how long it took for opposition to solidify against these more extreme stands; this itself is a sign of the corrosive effect of the atmosphere ushered in by the Seventh Congress.) As long as the CPUSA stayed within the bounds of the wrong orientations fashionable in the post-World War II period of the international communist movement, and within the bounds of the Seventh Congress of the CI, it could not throw off the basic liberal-labor stands of Browder and return to revolutionary Leninism.

The Influence of the Seventh Congress Is a Barrier to Carrying the Struggle Against Revisionism Through to the End

Today the struggle against Browderism in the American working class movement is far from over. The influence of Browderism survives in the politics of the liquidators, who are seeking to keep the working class and progressive activists tied to the tail of the Democratic Party, the labor bureaucrats, the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nationalities, and the liberal bourgeoisie generally. Building the revolutionary movement is inseparable from a relentless struggle against all those political trends which seek to mire the working masses in the swamp of class collaboration and bourgeois politics. Up-

holding the standpoint of class struggle and building up the independent movement of the working class requires firm opposition to this new Browderite politics.

Indeed, today a few of the liquidators have even praised Browder's politics by name. But more generally, the liquidators support instead the various concepts of Browderism. Browderite distortions of the idea of the united front are one of the chief weapons in the liquidationist arsenal.

To build up the revolutionary movement, and to organize the class struggle through building up the political party of the working class, the Marxist-Leninist Party, we must carry the struggle against Browderism, and against modern revisionism as a whole, through to the end. Soviet revisionism, Chinese revisionism, Browderism and Trotskyism are poisons that are fatal to the revolutionary struggle of the working class. Today they meet on a common liquidationist platform.

The struggle against revisionism requires going back to the revolutionary ideas of Marxism-Leninism. The Seventh Congress of the CI introduced the corrosive practice of denigrating the revolutionary stand of Marxism-Leninism. It introduced erroneous concepts on the united front, on the nature of opportunism, on the methods of agitation and organization, and a number of other questions. The "new tactical orientation" of the Seventh Congress has been shown in practice to be wrong, and it is today upheld as a shield by many of the liquidators. (In order to uphold revolutionary Leninism, it is necessary to subject the views of the Seventh Congress to criticism and to liberate the present-day struggle from the influence of erroneous traditions.)

Criticism of the Seventh Congress does not mean denigrating the memory of the many communist martyrs of the struggle against fascism in the slightest. On the contrary, the real way to honor their memory is to exert all ones' strength and abilities to carrying forward the struggle against the bourgeoisie. In this struggle, we must make full use of the rich experience of the communist movement in the past. The study of this experience helps clarify the issues explained in the classic writings of Marxism-Leninism. But the study of this experience must also involve criticism of mistakes, so that they can be corrected in the present practice of the revolutionary movement. And indeed, if the views of the Seventh Congress are not criticized, then it would mean, in effect, throwing out all the rich experience that preceded it and was allegedly rendered obsolete by it.

The struggle against revisionism has repeatedly shown its ability to invigorate the revolutionary working class movement. But in the last few decades certain wrong traditions have contributed to holding it back and preventing it from developing consistently. Let us clear away these obstacles to applying revolutionary Leninism to the concrete condi-

tions of today. Let us uphold the revolutionary principles of Leninism and carry the struggle

against revisionism through to the end. <>

**MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE SEVENTH CONGRESS
OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL
July-August 1935**

The Seventh Congress of the CI presented a "new tactical orientation" for the world communist movement, an orientation different from that pursued in the past. Judging the nature of this orientation is one of the major tasks facing any study of the lessons of the CI for the revolutionary struggle of today.

For some time the Central Committee of our Party had been studying the Seventh Congress as part of our detailed study of the views and experience of the CI on the united front. Our Party then began a party-wide discussion on the Seventh Congress at our Second Congress in Fall 1983. Since then additional materials have been circulated and discussed. This discussion was marked from the start by enthusiasm and unanimity. However it had been interrupted for over a year by the pressure of other work, both the heavy load of practical work which all our comrades engage in and by the other important theoretical work of the last period, including the propagation of our views on the current stands of the Party of Labor of Albania, the propagation of our views on the stands of the world communist movement in the period immediately following World War II, and the work of the Second National Conference of Fall 1984 on the black liberation struggle.

Recently our Party voted unanimously to condemn the "new tactical orientation" of the Seventh Congress as a backward turn in the development of the CI and a harmful influence on the heroic communist work in leading the anti-fascist struggle. The

Workers Advocate Supplement will be carrying many materials examining this Congress, and the results of the implementation of its views. This will allow the reader to come to his own decision concerning the stand of the Seventh Congress and the correct way to apply united front tactics.

Among the materials to be published are the following:

- * Further analysis of Dimitrov's famous report at the Seventh Congress.

- * A study of the experience of the French Communist Party in applying the line of the Seventh Congress and of the French Popular Front.

- * A study of the experience of the Communist Party of Albania (now the Party of Labor of Albania) in defeating the fascist occupation by Italy and Germany and in carrying the struggle forward to the socialist revolution.

- * Some remarks on the general line of the world communist movement in the period between the Sixth and Seventh Congress of the CI, defending this important period of world communism and upholding its general stands, but noting certain difficulties that the Executive Committee of the CI had in addressing certain subtle tactical questions.

We will begin in this issue with an introduction to the study of Dimitrov's speeches at the Seventh Congress. (See the article which begins on the next page.) <>

SOME NOTES ON THE SEVENTH WORLD CONGRESS OF THE CI

The following notes discuss certain of the main features of Dimitrov's speech at the Seventh Congress. They are to serve as an introduction to the further analysis of Dimitrov's report that will be printed in a subsequent issue of

A Turn in the General Line of the International Communist Movement

The first point to be noted is that the Seventh World Congress of the CI itself proclaimed that on various subjects it was providing new views, different from those of the past. It did this in a devious way. On one hand, it presented itself as simply following in the footsteps of the previous congresses and as upholding all the past activity of the ECCI (Executive Committee of the CI). On the other hand, it not only created the general impression that it was throwing out the former views, and that this change would solve all the problems facing the working class movement, but in various passages it actually asserted that it was providing a new line. It called for a change in the general orientation of the communists, including changes with respect to united front tactics, the assessment of social-democracy, the method of overcoming the split in the working class movement, the method of agitation on the questions of war and peace, the stand towards bourgeois democracy, and so forth. If one puts these passages together, one gets striking confirmation of the fact that this Congress marked a new general orientation and was intended to do so.

In his remarks that concluded the Seventh World Congress, Dimitrov proclaimed that: "Ours has been a Congress of a **new tactical orientation for the Communist International.**" (Emphasis as in the original.) To a certain extent, Dimitrov tried to present this as simply adapting the communist tactics to meet the changed world situation. But, as we shall see, these changes affected the basic line itself. They amounted to throwing aside the revolutionary Leninist teachings, and they were destined to weaken the anti-fascist struggle and do great harm to the communist movement. In this section we shall start by simply listing the main changes proclaimed at the Seventh World Congress, all of which were harmful; this alone shows the extensive nature of the changes made in the mid-1930's. Then we shall go into more detail on some of the changes, while leaving others for subsequent articles in The Workers' Advocate Supplement.

** The Seventh Congress centered its attention on the question of the united front. Dimitrov, soon after declaring that the Congress had a new tactical orientation for the work of the CI, stressed that: "The Congress has taken a firm decision that the

united front tactics must be applied **in a new way.**" (Emphasis as in the original.) As we shall see, this "new way" consisted of the demand that united fronts from above be realized **at all costs** with the social-democrats and, generally, the liberals. Everything else was condemned as "sectarianism", and all policy, agitation and actions were to be reshaped according as to what facilitated such united fronts.

** In his "Speech in Reply to the Discussion," Dimitrov also stressed that there was a new view on social-democracy. He stated:

"Comrades, in view of the tactical problems confronting us, it is very important to give a correct reply to the question of whether Social-Democracy at the present time is still the principal bulwark of the bourgeoisie, and if so, where? ... The joint effect of all this has been to make it increasingly difficult, and in some countries actually impossible, for Social-Democracy to preserve its former role of bulwark of the bourgeoisie. ... the self-criticism of those German comrades, who in their speeches mentioned the necessity of ceasing to cling to the letter of obsolete formulas and decisions concerning Social-Democracy ... was correct." (See the passage entitled "The

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Some Notes on the Seventh World Congress of the CI

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Role of Social-Democracy and Its Attitude Toward the United Front of the Proletariat.")

Dimitrov went on to paint the astonishing perspective that "The process of revolutionization in the ranks of the Social-Democratic Parties now going on in all countries" would lead everywhere to the merger of the social-democratic and communist parties. He admitted only that "In a number of countries this will be a more or less difficult, a more or less complicated and prolonged process" so that "We must even reckon with the possibility that ... some Social-Democratic Parties and organizations will continue to exist for a time as independent organizations or parties." Elsewhere, presumably, the process of merger would be even smoother.

** It is this utopia of the world-wide revolutionary role of social-democracy and of world-wide merger between social-democracy and communism that was behind Dimitrov's proclamation in his closing speech that the CI had now entered upon the path of ending the split in the working class movement. Referring to merger with social-democracy as "forming a single mass political party of the working class," Dimitrov declared this in large shining letters as one of the new points of the Seventh Congress:

"At this Congress we have taken the course of forming a **single mass political party of the working class**, to end the political split in the ranks of the working class, a split caused by the class collaboration policy of the Social-Democratic Parties." (Emphasis as in the original.)

The social-democrats may have been guilty of class collaboration in the past, Dimitrov says in essence, but that's a matter of ancient history.

** In the closing speech at the Seventh Congress, Dimitrov also declared that there was a new line in the struggle against imperialist war as well. He stated:

"Ours is a **Congress of struggle for the preservation of peace, against the threat of imperialist war.**

"We are now raising the issue of this struggle in a **new way**. Our Congress is decidedly opposed to the fatalistic outlook on the question of imperialist war emanating from old Social-Democratic notions. ...

"Today the world is not what it was in 1914." (Emphasis as in the original.)

Here we see Dimitrov championing the catchwords, so familiar from the statements of the post-World War II period, about opposing "fatalism" and about the changes in the world "since 1914". And the "new way" of approaching the question of war and peace consisted in putting forth peace as the central slogan and throwing out the revolutionary content of the struggle against war. As Ercoli (one of Togli-

atti's pseudonyms) stated in the major report to the Seventh Congress entitled "The Preparations for Imperialist War and the Tasks of the CI":

"The slogan of peace becomes our central slogan in the fight against war." (VII Congress of the CI, Abridged Stenographic Report, Moscow, 1939, p. 415, emphasis as in the original)

** In his "Speech In Reply to the Discussion," Dimitrov also talks of the need for a new attitude to bourgeois-democracy. He stated:

"Our attitude towards bourgeois democracy is not the same under all conditions. For instance, at the time of the October Revolution, the Russian Bolsheviks engaged in a life-and-death struggle against all political parties which opposed the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship under the slogan of the defense of bourgeois democracy. ... The situation is quite different in the capitalist countries at present. ... Now the toiling masses in a number of capitalist countries are faced with the necessity of making a **definite** choice, and of making it today, not between proletarian dictatorship and bourgeois democracy, but between bourgeois democracy and fascism.

"Besides, we have now a situation which differs from that which existed, for example, in the epoch of capitalist stabilization. At that time the fascist danger was not as acute as it is today. ...

"...It was the mistake of the Communists in a number of countries, particularly in Germany, that they failed to take into account the changes which had taken place, but continued to repeat those slogans, maintain those tactical positions which had been correct a few years before, especially when the struggle for the proletarian dictatorship was an immediate issue..."

Note that Dimitrov is calling for new "tactical positions" on the question of "bourgeois democracy", different from those of the Bolsheviks in 1917 or of the international communist movement at the time of capitalist stabilization. He says that the struggle against fascism and reaction requires this change, which he apparently regards as taking up the slogan of "defense of bourgeois democracy".

At the end of these notes we shall refer to Lenin's stand with respect to Kornilov's attempt to install a military dictatorship by overthrowing the bourgeois-democratic Kerensky government in the months prior to the Great October Socialist Revolution of the Bolsheviks in 1917. Lenin did not find it necessary to surrender the work for the socialist revolution or to glorify bourgeois-democracy to be able to fight effectively against the Kornilovite danger. And it should be noted that, contrary to Dimitrov's implication, the CI had long experience

with the struggle against fascist coups in a number of countries — Italy, Bulgaria, Poland, etc. However we shall leave the detailed refutation of Dimitrov's deceptive arguments on bourgeois-democracy, his reversion to stock opportunist sophistry, to a later article.

** There was also a new line on the liberal bourgeoisie. However, Dimitrov was careful in this case never to mention the capitalist parties by that name, "capitalist", but instead presented them as parties of the toilers.

For example, he talked of an "anti-fascist people's front" of the toiling masses, but then added that it should include the Radical Party in France, which is the party of the liberal bourgeoisie. However, Dimitrov didn't call it a capitalist party, a party of the liberal bourgeoisie, but instead characterized it as a party of the working masses, albeit one "still under the influence of the bourgeoisie".

Ever since the Seventh World Congress, this Congress and Dimitrov's speech has been widely cited as the advocate of unity with the liberals and the liberal bourgeoisie, and it is notable that neither Dimitrov nor any other prominent participant in the Seventh Congress ever challenged that interpretation.

Thus the Seventh World Congress, by its own assertion, provided "a new tactical orientation for the Communist International" on a whole series of questions: the united front, social-democracy, the method of overcoming the split in the working class movement, war and peace, bourgeois democracy, and so forth. In fact, it marked a major turn in the life of the communist movement, and its decisions affected all fronts of work. This will become even more apparent when we discuss some of these changes in more detail, rather than simply listing them as above.

The Demagogy of Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress

But before we go further into some of these orientations, we must take some time to point out the demagogical and disgusting method of discussion used by Dimitrov and other major speakers at the Seventh Congress. Dimitrov and company were not straightforward about their views, but engaged in the maximum amount of confusion-mongering and trickery.

One of the basic methods used by Dimitrov in presenting the new line was to repeat revolutionary principles which had nothing to do with what he was proposing.

For example, consider his description of what the united front should be. In his Report, Dimitrov says a number of things about the united front tactics which seem reasonable, simply better or worse repetitions of the ABC's of communist tactics.

Thus he talks about *militant* struggle in defense of the interests of the working masses. He states that:

"...The defense of the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, the defense of the working class against fascism, must form the **starting point** and **main content** of the united front in all capitalist countries.

"We must not confine ourselves to bare appeals to struggle for the proletarian dictatorship, but must also find and advance those slogans and forms of struggle which arise out of the vital needs of the masses, and are commensurate with their fighting capacity at the given stage of development. ...

"**First**, joint struggle really to shift the burden of the consequences of the crisis onto the shoulders of the ruling classes, the shoulders of the capitalists, landlords -- in a word, to the shoulders of the rich. ..." (See the passage "Content and Forms of the United Front.")

Why, Dimitrov even goes on to emphasize that "The chief stress in all this must be laid on developing **mass action** locally,..." (He does, however, identify this with agreements that have been reached locally, rather than nationally.) And he states that pacts and agreements are only "an auxiliary means for realizing joint action, but by itself does not constitute a united front."

But what was the reality behind Dimitrov's words?

This reality can be seen by the example of France. Dimitrov himself says that he is theorizing on the experience of the French working class movement. He says, in his Closing Remarks:

"We have not invented this task. It has been prompted by the experience of the world labor movement itself, above all, the experience of the proletariat of France. ... the French workers, both Communists and Socialists, have once more advanced the French labor movement to first place, to a **leading position** in capitalist Europe,...."

But did the new methods of the united front in France, did the agreements negotiated with the French social-democrats, in fact promote effective, militant mass struggle to fight the capitalist offensive and the fascists, to shift the burden of the economic crisis onto the shoulders of the rich, and to purge the fascists?

As a matter of fact, prior to the Seventh Congress, in order to obtain the pact with the social-democratic leaders, the Communist Party of France had to agree to omit trade union action from the agreement (so much for rank-and-file action to shift the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of the rich) and to water down their tactics and actions, limiting even the number of demonstrations. Dimitrov should have discussed concretely the concessions the

CP of France had made and the prospects for the struggle. Instead of this, he paints beautiful but meaningless pictures of some ideal, militant united front agreements with the social-democrats, agreements that defend the immediate economic and political interests of the working class, and on and on and on, a picture that has little if anything to do with the harsh reality.

Or again, Dimitrov, discussing the tasks in France, talks big of the "purging of the State apparatus, the army and the police of the conspirators who are preparing a fascist **coup**." (Section II.C entitled "France") Why, if the new tactics could achieve this, wouldn't it show how backward, if not downright criminally sectarian, the old tactics were?

But what was the reality? Thorez, speaking August 3, the very next day after Dimitrov's statement on purging the state apparatus of fascists, showed what these fine words became when one was bound hand in foot to the bourgeois Radical Party through the new line. Thorez, leader of the CP of France, identified the spirit of Dimitrov's remarks with the empty, bombastic declaration of a prominent Radical that the wonderful French army was already loyal to the French republic. Thorez stated:

"...On July 14, in the demonstration of the People's Front, the Radical deputy, Rucart, vice-chairman of the Army Committee of the Chamber [French parliament], spoke in terms which I should like to be allowed to quote, so much do they harmonize with the thought expressed yesterday by our Comrade Dimitrov.

"The Republicans [supporters of the bourgeois-democratic republic as opposed to the monarchists and fascists] know that they can count upon the loyalty of the army -- the expression of public force, the army composed of the sons of the whole people -- to give the lie to all those who may endeavor to make of it a tool for the ambition of one man or for that of a handful of plotters. In the army, the navy and the air force -- officers, non-coms, soldiers and sailors -- they [the Republicans] salute the national forces constituted for the defence of liberty." (VII Congress of the CI, Abridged Stenographic Report of Proceedings, p. 212)

If the French armed forces were actually so committed to liberty, there would have been little need to worry about a fascist coup in the first place and little reason to talk of purging the army. Yet Thorez blandly salutes the French army, instead of purging it, and confidently presents this as the spirit of Dimitrov's Report. Needless to say, no one contradicted Thorez, least of all Dimitrov in his Speech in Reply to Discussion.

The same thing takes place with respect to the question of united front government in Dimitrov's Report. Dimitrov in his Report tends to give many

formulations that basically repeat the formulations of previous CI congresses. Much (not all) of what he says therefore appears reasonable, if taken by itself.

For example, Dimitrov assures one and all that he is not an opportunist and that the new line is not opportunist. Why, he agrees with all the past criticisms of opportunist distortions of the concept of "workers' government". He says, in the passage entitled "The Government of the United Front" in Sec. I of his speech, that "The **Right opportunists** considered that a "workers' government" ought to keep "within the framework of bourgeois democracy,..." He says that in 1923, in the German provinces of Saxony and Thuringia, "...the Communists should have used their positions primarily **for the purpose of arming the proletariat**." He says that the communists must demand "control of production, control of the banks, disbanding of the police, its replacement by an armed workers' militia, etc."

But once again the question arises: what did all Dimitrov's resonant-sounding phrases have to do with what was actually being planned and what actually ended up being done?

Well, the discussion on united front government at the Seventh Congress was designed to pave the way for the CP of France to support a Popular Front government in France. Indeed, such a government did come to power next year, 1936, due in large part to the work of the CP of France.

And what did this government do? It basically did none of the good things promised by Dimitrov. Yet neither Dimitrov nor the CP of France broke with the government on that account. They forgot all about the promises to oppose right opportunism.

Indeed the French CP, far from overflowing the boundaries of bourgeois democracy, far from arming the workers, far from demanding control of production, control of the banks, disbanding of the police, and so forth, were concerned to do nothing that would frighten away the liberal bourgeois Radicals. Their rationale for not entering the first Popular Front government in 1936 was, in part, that their presence in the government would frighten the bourgeoisie.

Dimitrov also makes use of other demagogical methods in his Report. For instance, he parodied the issues at stake and boiled them down to -- either mere repetition of the abstract truths of communism in splendid sectarian isolation, or the new line. His discussions of the history of the communist parties and the international movement are a masterpiece of garbling everything together. And he sidesteps one issue after another with empty rhetoric.

One of the main difficulties in evaluating the new line of the Seventh Congress is penetrating through all the camouflage and grasping what is actually being put forth.

A Congress of Euphoria

One additional feature of Dimitrov's confusion-mongering deserves particular attention in and of itself.

In our Party's study of the post-World War II period, we noted how the mistaken orientations were put forward under the guise of the most optimistic and euphoric assessments of the immediate prospects. Various stands which one might have imagined could only be defended as the most regrettable compromises forced by unfortunate circumstances were actually hailed as great advances and the key to unprecedented victories. For example, each new watering down of the line by the World Peace Council was hailed as the key that would unlock the door to millions upon millions of more sympathizers and block the road to war. And each new rightist stand to be spread in the world communist movement — from petty-bourgeois nationalism to parliamentary socialism — was hailed as the breakthrough that opened the doors to heaven.

This type of official euphoria to justify opportunist stands makes its appearance in a big way at the Seventh Congress; it marks quite a contrast to the style of the previous World Congresses.

The Seventh Congress met at a critical moment in the history of the world communist movement. A world clash of unprecedented proportions between communism and capitalism was in the making. Capitalism was in the midst of deep crisis and revolutionary forces were organizing, but at the same time the blight of fascism was spreading throughout Europe and elsewhere. The working class movement faced grave torments and the most severe trial. This called for a sober assessment of the tactics for and the state of the forces of the revolutionary movement: there had to be unbreakable confidence in the prospects of victory combined with the most practical and careful judgement concerning the next steps to be taken.

Instead the Seventh Congress was responsible for some of the most absurd assessments. While claiming that the new line was necessary to oppose sectarianism which "finds expression particularly in overestimating the revolutionization of the masses, in overestimating the speed at which they are abandoning the positions of reformism, in attempts to leap over difficult stages and over complicated tasks of the movement" (Dimitrov's Report, Section III), it made the most incredible claims concerning what could be expected if only the new line were put in place.

For example, at the same time as he denounces "self-satisfied sectarianism" for "overestimating the revolutionization of the masses," he made the most euphoric, complacent and absurd exaggeration of the revolutionization of the social-democratic parties and leaderships. According to Dimitrov, it was now the time for the amalgamation of the communist and social-democratic parties. Meanwhile Pieck, in

his "Report on the Activities of the Executive Committee of the CI" to the Seventh Congress, declared nothing less than the end of the danger of reformism. "The era of the Second International in the ranks of the working class movement is over," he declared. "The situation in the capitalist countries, the position of world capitalism, which is unable to find a way out of its difficulties or to alleviate the want and hunger of the masses, shows that a new rise, a new blossoming of reformism is already impossible."

The spirit of Dimitrov's speech and the Seventh Congress as a whole was that the problems in the past were all due to left sectarianism and would now all dissolve. If the communists faced great difficulties in penetrating the reformist trade unions, in stopping the fascist offensive, in training new members, in finding a common language with and arousing backward masses, or in any sphere, it was all due to this leftist sectarianism and now would all be solved.

This euphoria appeared as well on the question of war and peace, where some truly astonishing assessments were made. It must be borne in mind that, at the time of the Seventh Congress, World War II was already casting its shadow before it. The world communist movement was openly discussing this, and the Seventh Congress itself devoted much time to questions that stemmed from this. Yet the Seventh Congress demanded that agitation must center on putting forward the peace slogan. In his "Report on the Preparations for Imperialist War and the Tasks of the CI," Ercoli (a pseudonym for Togliatti) declared that "The slogan of peace becomes our central slogan in the fight against war." (*Ibid.*, p. 415)

Indeed, in his "Reply to the Discussion," he explained that:

"Under such circumstances, we must in concluding the discussion on this point of the agenda of our Congress boldly put forward the following prospect: that it is not only possible to postpone war but that **it is even possible to prevent the outbreak of a new imperialist war.** But for this prospect to become real, our whole fight against war must assume a character differing profoundly from that which it had before." (*Ibid.*, p. 496, emphasis added)

Thus the new line would even prevent the coming world war through agitation for peace in general without the need to overthrow the bourgeoisie of key imperialist powers through revolution or any connection to the revolutionary movement at all. And this incredible nonsense was said in 1935! Just try to find an example of self-satisfied euphoria that can beat that! And yet this new line was promoted under the pretext that it was the former, Leninist stand that "attempt(ed) to leap over difficult stages and over complicated tasks."

The United Front From Above At All Costs

Now let us proceed to one of the key aspects of the new line. The central theme of this line was the question of the united front. Dimitrov held that united front tactics were to be applied in a "new way." What was this way?

We shall see this "new way" unfold if we examine the situation in the mid-1930's and how Dimitrov proposed to deal with it.

Dimitrov described the difficulty facing the working class as follows:

"Fascism was able to come to power **primarily** because the working class, owing to the policy of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie pursued by the Social-Democratic leaders, **proved to be split, politically and organizationally disarmed**, in face of the onslaught of the bourgeoisie. And the Communist Parties, on the other hand, were **not strong enough** to be able, apart from and in the teeth of the Social-Democrats, to rouse the masses and to lead them in a decisive struggle against fascism." (See "Is the Victory of Fascism Inevitable?" in Section I)

This description brings up two basic aspects of the situation: the social-democratic parties collaborated with or would not fight the fascists, and the communist parties were not yet strong enough to rouse the masses in the face of social-democratic sabotage and diehard resistance.

This was indeed a difficult and painful situation. As a result, the working masses were forced in various countries to go through the torments of fascism. At the same time, this experience was itself becoming a factor helping to arouse the world proletariat.

How did Dimitrov propose to deal with this situation?

He asserts that:

"Was the victory of fascism inevitable in **Germany**? No, the German working class could have prevented it.

"But in order to do so, it should have compelled the establishment of a united anti-fascist proletarian front, forced the Social-Democratic leaders to put a stop to their campaign against the Communists and to accept the repeated proposals of the Communist Party for united action against fascism." (*Ibid.*)

Dimitrov had just explained that the social-democrats stubbornly stuck to the policy of class collaboration and it was necessary to organize the struggle "apart from and in the teeth of the Social-Democrats." He now closes his eyes and "leap(s) over difficult stages and over complicated tasks" by throwing aside his own description of the facts and concluding that the workers should have and could have compelled the social-democratic leaders to fight fascism. This is not an answer, but a sigh of

regret or a terrified retreat from reality. It is reformist fantasy, no matter how much it poses as sober realism.

Why didn't Dimitrov mention, either here or anywhere else in his Report, that fascism would also have been defeated if the workers had succeeded in breaking free from social-democratic class collaboration and had rallied around the fighting policy of the communists? Or that this was their task in order to defeat fascism after the fascist takeover. Indeed, this was how fascism was defeated in Albania. There it was a matter of the relation of the communists with the bourgeois nationalists, the Balli Kombetar (as the social-democrats were only a minor factor in Albania). The Albanian toilers never succeeded in forcing the Balli Kombetar into a united front with the Communist Party, but instead the CP of Albania (now called the Party of Labor) won the leadership of the masses through leading them in the anti-fascist national liberation war. Of course, this did not happen in a mechanical way, with the masses declaring directly for all the principles of communism as against bourgeois nationalism. The Albanian communists made effective use of united front tactics and of rallying the masses around the burning political task of the day: armed struggle against the fascist occupiers.

Perhaps it might be said that the German communists had not yet succeeded in breaking the masses from social-democracy, so that some other path would have been needed to stop fascism. But, by the same token, the German social-democratic leaders had remained adamant against fighting fascism, so that the path of uniting with them in anti-fascist struggle had been similarly blocked. It is clear that Dimitrov had not found a key overlooked by the German communists. He was not giving a sober historical assessment, but instead giving his recipe for what should be done in the future.

Dimitrov gives only one prospect for defeating fascism -- forcing the social-democratic parties and their leaders, to carry out an all-sided, militant and fighting proletarian policy and merging with them.

There is no alternative in Dimitrov's Report. He discusses all sorts of possibilities: will the united front government be a necessary stage in the road to revolution? how soon will the social-democrats form a single party with the communists? what are the different types of demands that can be raised in uniting with the social-democrats? But he never raises what happens if the social-democratic leaders, despite everything, cannot be compelled to become good boys. And yet this last alternative is the usual situation facing the working class.

The implication is crystal clear. One must come to terms with the social-democratic parties and leaders at all costs. Anyone who doesn't, is a hopeless left sectarian. This is the "new way" united front tactics are to be applied. For Dimitrov

trov, united front tactics and the very term "united front" apply only to united fronts from above with the social-democratic parties and their leaders (and the liberals, pacifists, etc.) or to the process of bowing deeper and deeper to the right in order to remove anything that stood in the way of such agreements.

This united front could allegedly be achieved immediately and without more ado. As Dimitrov says, emphasizing every word:

"... The first thing that must be done, the thing with which to commence, is to form a united front, to establish unity of action of the workers in every factory, in every district, in every region, in every country, all over the world." (At the start of Section II)

Ever since the CI was founded, it devoted all its efforts to establishing proletarian unity. It is clear that this unity can only be accomplished in the course of arousing the working masses in struggle. But now Dimitrov informs us that it is all very simple — just begin with establishing a united front. Compel the social-democratic parties and leaders to take part in the struggle. The context makes it quite clear that when Dimitrov says "the first thing," this is not just an agitational turn of phrase. Indeed, as Dimitrov says a few paragraphs later, "And it [°unity of action by the proletariat in the individual countries and throughout the whole world] is possible at this very moment." And in fact it was not obtainable "at this very moment," this was allegedly the fault of the leftist sectarianism of the communists.

Of course, it was possible at that very moment to use united front tactics. Such tactics are generally applicable, even at unfavorable moments. For example, even during the present ebb in the mass movement our Party is able to use Leninist united front tactics and this is one of the secrets of our success. But this is not the same thing as obtaining agreements with the opportunists, although such agreements cannot be ruled out in principle.

Nor is it the same thing as creating a situation where "unity of action" can be said to prevail among the proletariat. Individual successes cannot be described as establishing the general "unity of action" of the proletariat; for example, consider Lenin's description of a demonstration in Rome where the proletariat followed the communists against the fascists. He said that this was an example of winning the majority of the proletariat, but described it as doing so "only partially, only momentarily, only locally". ("A Letter to the German Communists, August 14, 1921", Collected Works, Vol. 32, p. 522)

To assert that a durable unity of action of the entire proletariat was possible all over the world at that very instant in 1935 was absurd. In general, to assert that the unity of action of the proletariat can be established at will at any in-

stant is equally absurd.

Yet Dimitrov is talking precisely of a decisive and durable "unity of action" (which he does not call winning the majority of the proletariat to communism, a concept he avoids talking about, probably regarding such talk as sectarianism). He is not simply talking of united front tactics. The German CP used united front tactics, but he criticized them severely. The CI in general used united front tactics before the Seventh Congress; but Dimitrov is calling for something different. Furthermore, it is clear that, to stop fascism when the bourgeoisie is intent on installing it in power, one needs a solid unity of action, not just individual successes. No, it is precisely a solid, durable unity of the proletariat as a whole which Dimitrov is saying is obtainable in an instant, obtainable via major united fronts from above with the social-democratic parties and leaders.

How was the United Front From Above to be Obtained?

But how was one to achieve these major united front agreements from above, this complete unity of action, in the face of social-democratic splitting activity and class collaboration? What could the communists do that was so dramatically different from what they had already been doing?

The implication of Dimitrov's Report was clear: they must make one concession after another. They must sell the communist tactics and organization off piece by piece. And in fact, under the new line, the communist parties would have to sell various forms of the mass struggle; fractions in the trade unions; opposition to opportunist politics; revolutionary agitation; support for the liberation struggle of the colonies, etc.

Dimitrov suggests throughout his Report that it suffices for the communists to merely (merely!) shelve the revolution, as if it were something affecting only the future and could be safely left to the future. He apparently believed that it was only the future insurrection that divided the social-democrats and the communists, at least now that the fascist offensive had radicalized the social-democratic parties and leaders, so that both social-democratic and communist parties could enthusiastically unite on the immediate tasks. So, by raising the banner of bourgeois democracy, by leaving revolution out of mass agitation, by adapting to the prejudices of the petty-bourgeoisie, unity could be achieved right away, with the revolution left over as a future issue.

This idea of Dimitrov's is expressed most clearly in his denigration of socialist revolution and embrace of bourgeois democracy, which will be dealt with in a subsequent article. But it is also expressed, in more veiled form, in his description of the united front.

Thus let us examine more of Dimitrov's passage

where he says that unity of action is possible "at this very moment". On the surface, this passage apparently simply reiterates, in better or worse fashion, the ABC's of united front tactics, namely, that the masses must be united in the struggle against the class enemy even though they still have not adopted the slogan for revolution. But the meaning of a passage depends on the context, as well as the words.

Dimitrov states:

"... The establishment of unity of action by all sections of the working class, irrespective of their party or organizational affiliation, is necessary **even before the majority of the working class is united in the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and the victory of the proletarian revolution.**

"Is it possible to realize this unity of action by the proletariat in the individual countries and throughout the whole world? Yes, it is. And it is possible at this very moment. The Communist International **attaches no conditions to unity of action except one, and that an elementary condition acceptable for all workers, viz., that the unity of action be directed against fascism, against the offensive of capital, against the threat of war, against the class enemy.** This is our condition."

Dimitrov here is talking about the general unity of action of the proletariat, not individual united actions, as we observed at the end of the last section. This is one of the reasons why this passage is not simply the ABC's of united front tactics.

We would note that the development of durable unity of action of the proletariat, whenever the proletariat has developed beyond a certain point, is generally not independent of its revolutionary sentiments and party affiliations. If the proletariat is not in a militant mood, if revolutionary sentiment is not building up, it is rarely likely that it will be able to sustain powerful class battles. We must win the majority of the working class for communism if we wish to speak of a united proletariat, of ending the split in the working class movement. The question of the slogan for revolution is one thing, but the question of whether the struggle takes on revolutionary features, overflows the bounds of normalcy is another. A proletariat that is still enchained to reformist normalcy will not unite with the revolutionary proletariat in major class clashes. Or, to be precise, such unity will only take place as the proletariat throws off the reformist chains.

This brings us to perhaps the basic point. Dimitrov talks of whether the majority of the working class is united for the victory of the proletarian revolution. But Dimitrov never distinguishes in his Report between conscious unity behind the slogans for the revolution and the question of revolutionary versus reformist methods in the class struggle. For

Dimitrov, the revolution is always some far off goal. There is never the question of developing the revolutionary movement at the present moment.

Once one understands this view of Dimitrov, the above passage becomes in his hands, whatever it would be in someone else's, the simple demand that the revolution be set aside. Revolutionary work is simply the future insurrection itself, and why interrupt the present class struggle by interjecting it?

In fact, the social-democrats and the communists were sharply divided on the question of struggle against or collaboration with the bourgeoisie. This question was the vital question for the immediate struggle and not just for the ultimate day of insurrection. The question of revolutionary versus reformist methods permeates every aspect of the on-going class struggle.

Lenin stressed that the difference between communism and social-democracy concerned every sphere of work, not just the day of insurrection. He held that:

"...The Scheidemann [social-democratic rabid social-chauvinists] and Kautsky [social-democratic centrists and phrasemongers] gang differ from us not only (and not chiefly) because they do not recognize the armed uprising and we do. The chief and radical difference is that in all spheres of work (in bourgeois parliaments, trade unions, co-operatives, journalistic work etc.) they pursue an inconsistent, opportunistic policy, even a policy of downright treachery and betrayal.

"Fight against the social-traitors, against reformism and opportunism--this political line can and must be followed without exception in **all** spheres of our struggle." ("Greetings to Italian, French and German Communists," Oct 1919, emphasis as in the original)

This is why it was and is impossible to achieve unity with the social-democratic parties and leader simply by dealing with the immediate issues. But the new line made failure to immediately achieve the united front unthinkable. Thus began the process of selling the class struggle and the communist organization to the social-democrats (and even the liberals) in exchange for agreements or the illusion of agreements.

This process of unprincipled concessions has a certain momentum of its own. Whatever Dimitrov, Stalin and other proponents of the new line may originally have felt was the acceptable limits to concessions, there was a constant pressure to go further and further downhill as time went on. By the time of the Seventh Congress, in order to achieve united front agreements with the French social-democrats, the concessions had gone very far indeed. On one hand, the methods of struggle were to be limited to what was acceptable to the social democrats. On the other hand, things went so far

that Dimitrov sanctioned the liquidation of trade union fractions.

Communist fractions in the trade unions were one of the basic parts of the organization of the parties of the CI. Yet Dimitrov, in order to justify the agreements the French CP had reached with the French social-democrats just before the Seventh Congress, brushed their liquidation aside with a sweep of the hand. He didn't discuss the utter seriousness of this concession, point to any exceptional circumstances that might justify taking such a step temporarily, or deal with what measures should be taken to ensure that it wasn't simply a major step on the liquidationist road (apparently no such preventative measures were taken). He didn't discuss any way to achieve the purposes of trade union fractions in some other form.

Instead Dimitrov connected the liquidation of the trade unions to his acceptance of the idea of "the independence of the united trade unions of all political parties." This is usually called "trade union neutrality," and the CI had pointed for years to the fraud of so-called "trade union neutrality" and its real meaning as dependence on bourgeois politics. Even the Second International, in the days before its bankruptcy, had dealt with this issue. Lenin pointed out, with reference to the Seventh Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart, that it had resolved the issue of "trade union neutrality":

"The resolution on the relations between the socialist parties and the trade unions is of especial importance to us Russians. ... And the Stuttgart resolution--as Kautsky rightly observed and as anyone who takes the trouble to read it carefully will see--puts an end to recognition of the 'neutrality' principle. There is not a word in it about neutrality or non-party principles. On the contrary, it definitely recognizes the need for closer and stronger connections between the unions and the socialist parties." ("The International Socialist Congress in Stuttgart," Collected Works, vol. 13, p. 78)

In a separate article, entitled "Trade Union Neutrality," Lenin stressed that:

"Our whole Party, consequently, has now recognized that work in the trade unions must be conducted not in the spirit of trade union neutrality but in the spirit of the closest possible relations between them and the Social-Democratic Party. It is also recognized that the partisanship of the trade unions must be achieved exclusively by S.D. work within the unions, that the S.D.'s must form solid Party units in the unions, ..." (Collected Works, vol. 13, p. 460)

By accepting trade union neutrality in principle, Dimitrov showed the full opportunist nature of his bartering with the social-democrats. Dimitrov

showed the essence of the new line -- covering up the abandonment of real work with fine phrases -- by pontificating that he would accept trade union neutrality but not the dependence of the trade unions on the bourgeoisie. He told the Seventh Congress:

"... We are even prepared to forego the idea of creating Communist fractions in the trade unions if that is necessary to promote trade union unity. We are prepared to come to terms as to the independence of the united trade unions of all political parties. But we are decidedly opposed to any **dependence** of the trade unions on the bourgeoisie, and do not give up our basic point of view that it is impermissible for trade unions to adopt a neutral position in regard to the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie." (From near the end of Section V.)

Here Dimitrov first accepts trade union neutrality, and then tries to sound orthodox by saying that he is against the trade unions being neutral in the class struggle. This is just acrobatics. The independence of the trade unions from the political party of the class-conscious workers inevitably fosters opportunism and standing aside from the political struggle, which in turn affects the very conduct of the economic struggle itself. The CI taught for years that alleged independence from parties inevitably meant dependence on bourgeois politics. Lenin pounded this home as well, and pointed out that the way out of neutrality was precisely the formation of revolutionary groups in the unions and close connections with the proletarian party. He wrote:

"...A truth most strikingly confirmed by the war should be brought home to the masses, namely, that so-called 'neutrality' is bourgeois deception or hypocrisy, that in fact it means **passive** submission to the bourgeoisie and to such of its particularly disgusting undertakings as imperialist war. ... Special Social-Democratic groups must be formed within all such organizations [°the industrial organizations of the working class, office employees, etc.];..." ("Tasks of the Left Zimmerwaldists in the Swiss Social-Democratic Party," Collected Works, Vol. 23, p. 144)

Dimitrov devotes his effort to liberal phrasemaking rather than real work. Furthermore, note how the momentum for one concession after another builds. Dimitrov's passage justifying abandoning the trade union fraction was written to justify the French, but it is stated for all countries. One suspects that this concession then became a minimum demand which every reformist everywhere could demand of the communists, if he so chose: abandon your fraction and accept trade union neutrality (or "independence") -- the French have already done so and your Dimitrov declared that you too will be willing to do so.

Thus the "new way" that united front tactics were to be interpreted is clear: United front tactics were now to mean the formation at all costs of major agreements from above with the social-democratic parties and their leaders and the liberals. These agreements, the united front from above, were no longer a part of united front tactics, as appropriate, but were to be regarded as the very touchstone of real united front work as opposed to sectarianism. No longer would such agreements be judged by revolutionary criteria, but the revolutionary criteria would be judged by their appropriateness for such agreements.

This was to mean making tremendous concessions to bring about the united front from above, since there was no other way to entice the social-democrats and liberals. These concessions would mean not just changing the tone of the struggle against opportunism, as is sometimes necessary, but would amount to toning down the class struggle to what was acceptable to the social-democrats and liberals. The fancy words and slick demagoguery to the contrary, it would not be a united front in support of sharp class struggle, but a struggle and organization watered down to what was acceptable to the hoped-for allies. And one of the tasks of the Seventh Congress was to work out methods of agitation that might not frighten away these hoped-for allies and to tar the revolutionary methods of work to be discarded as "sectarianism."

Class Collaboration with the Bourgeois Liberals

It should also be noted that the new line demanded not only the united front from above at all costs with the social-democrats, but also a firm alliance with the liberals. Therefore, concessions were to be made to them also, as well as to the social-democrats. Thus the scope of concessions kept widening. Any talk of real social measures to aid the working masses was a fraud if these measures had to be designed in a way that wouldn't frighten the liberals.

In his Report, Dimitrov demanded alliance with the liberals through a perversion of the idea of a "people's front". Dimitrov carefully distinguished in his Report between his version of the united front of the working class (which he regarded basically as the alliance from above with the social-democrats) and his version of the "broad people's anti-fascist front" (which, in his view, included or is even mainly the alliance with the liberals).

Dimitrov begins by talking militantly of a people's front of the working class, peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petty-bourgeoisie. This is not a bad idea at all, and it is only too bad that, as we shall soon see, that Dimitrov really has something else in mind. But Dimitrov postures militantly, and presents himself as for an alliance of the working masses, stressing that the formation of such a people's front of the working masses

"is a particularly important task. The success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance between the proletariat on the one hand and the toiling peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie constituting a majority of the population of even industrially developed countries, on the other." (See the passage "The Anti-Fascist People's Front" in Section II of his Report.)

Here it sounds as if Dimitrov is talking about the necessity for the proletariat to lead the other toiling masses — in other words, the basic ABC's of communist tactics. The pre-Seventh Congress united front tactics of the CI had always dealt with the peasantry and urban petty-bourgeoisie.

But you know our Dimitrov's way of talking at the Seventh Congress. It turns out that Dimitrov, by a sleight of hand, actually is referring also to, or even primarily to, bourgeois organizations and parties. Look how Dimitrov makes the transition from the working masses to bourgeois organizations in this passage, a few paragraphs later, where he goes on to stress that:

"In forming the anti-fascist people's front, a correct approach to those organizations and parties to which a considerable number of the toiling peasantry and the mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie belong is of great importance.

"In the capitalist countries, the majority of these parties and organizations, political as well as economic, are still under the influence of the bourgeoisie and follow it. ... They include big kulaks (rich peasants) side by side with landless peasants, big business men alongside of petty shopkeepers, but control is in the hands of the former, the agents of big capital. ... Under certain conditions, we can and must bend our efforts to the task of drawing these parties and organizations or certain sections of them to the side of the anti-fascist people's front, despite their bourgeois leadership. Such, for instance, is today the situation in France with the Radical Party,..."
(Ibid., emphasis added)

But what are the parties that are under the control of the agents of big capital? Isn't this a euphemism for the capitalist parties? For example, the Democratic Party in the U.S. is under the control of agents of big capital, and pursues the interests of the capitalist class, yet it appeals to and hoodwinks wide sections of the petty bourgeoisie and part of the working class. And indeed, in his Report, Dimitrov, while pretending to oppose both Democrat and Republican, already has several hints about supporting the Democrat Franklin Roosevelt for reelection as president, while after the Seventh Congress the CI never rebuked the Communist Party of the USA or its leader Browder for the policy of

alliance with the Democratic Party.

Lenin long ago pointed out that the class nature of the British Labor Party couldn't be determined simply by its working class following and that it was actually a "thoroughly bourgeois party". (See the "Speech on Affiliation to the British Labor Party" at the Second Congress of the CI.) And here Lenin was talking about the British Labor Party, which had a direct organizational base in the trade unions and had the avowed goal of bringing together the working class. How much more does this apply to ordinary bourgeois parties, such as the Democratic Party and the French Radicals? (And, for that matter, even fascist parties, parties of the most reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie, have, if they are mass parties, some following among the petty-bourgeoisie.)

Indeed, it is crystal clear that Dimitrov is referring to bourgeois parties because he himself is careful to call for alliance with the Radical Party (also sometimes called Radical-Socialists, but it was not the social-democratic party but the liberal party) and including it in the anti-fascist people's front. And the Radicals were a notorious do-nothing party of corrupt parliamentarians, a party whose role was to enable various liberal mayors and other politicians to enter the French Chamber (parliament) and exploit it as their private preserve. Yet this talk of the Radicals was not a slip of the tongue by Dimitrov, but was fully verified by the talk of the French delegation at the Seventh Congress about their new rapprochement with the Radicals.

It is one thing to take account of the differences between the bourgeois liberals and the bourgeois reaction. It is quite another to prettify the liberals as anti-fascist fighters, to bring them into the anti-fascist front, to prettify their parties as organizations of the working masses, and to insist that "the success of the entire struggle of the proletariat is closely connected with the establishment of a fighting alliance" with the liberal parties.

What does a general plan of alliance with the liberals mean? It means making a mockery of all talk of social measures to aid the workers and peasants, for such measures would upset the liberal bourgeoisie. And indeed this was the history of the Popular Front with the Radicals in France. It means making a mockery of all talk of stern measures against fascism. And indeed this was the result of the Popular Front with the Radicals. It means abandoning the class analysis of fascism because this might offend the bourgeois liberals, and it means surrendering altogether the task of building the independent movement of the working masses, giving up the work to win the working masses away from the bourgeoisie, and instead lapsing into, nay, running towards, class collaboration. And indeed this was the poison that began to corrode the French Communist Party as it pursued the Popular Front with the

Radicals.

Bourgeois Liberalism Feared the Revolutionary Movement More Than It Feared Fascism

Thus we have seen that Dimitrov presents matters as if the bourgeois liberals were fighters against fascism. He bases his tactics on the view that the liberals will fight reaction and are an important section of the anti-fascist fighters. It is implied that the working class must put aside its class struggle because it hindered a people's front with such anti-fascist fighters as the liberals.

But what does the actual experience of the anti-fascist struggle show? Were the bourgeois liberals anti-fascist fighters?

The bourgeois liberal prefers milder forms of bourgeois rule than fascist reaction. But liberalism as a political trend fears the revolution more than it fears reaction. Liberalism aims at maintaining capitalist exploitation and at holding the masses down; this gives it something in common with the reaction. Like the reaction, it appeals to the exploiters and tries to prove to the bourgeoisie that it is the best representative of its interests. And when the bourgeoisie inclines to a new offensive against the masses, liberalism adapts itself to this offensive and even argues that it can carry it out more efficiently than the clumsy, heavyhanded reaction.

This is why the basic stand of the bourgeois liberal is high-sounding phrases about democracy, about the constitution, about the love of humanity, and, in practice, taking part in the bourgeois repression of the masses. Today for example, the liberal Democrats appeal for votes from the masses by talking about how they oppose Reaganism, while in Congress they pass one police-state and militarist measure after another, one austerity measure after another, one anti-immigrant measure after another. This was also the typical method of the liberal of the 1930s.

The French Radicals proved in the 1930s that they were no anti-fascist fighters. They constantly refrained from acting against the fascists, while harshly imposing one austerity measure after another on the working masses. Needless to say, they saw no need to support struggle against Franco's fascist revolt in Spain either. And, after the outbreak of World War II, it was fine with them to see the communist organizations in France banned, the main trade unions disbanded, communist militants carted off to prison, etc.

Then France fell. Faced with the occupation of France by the German Nazis, what did the Radicals do? Many prominent Radical leaders rushed to join the Nazi puppet government of Marshall Petain, which was allowed by the Nazis to administer one part of France.

The sorry collapse of French Radicalism in the

face of fascism was by no means an exception to the general history of bourgeois liberalism nor the particular history of the French Radicals. Consider, for example, the role of Italian liberalism in the rise of the fascist Mussolini in the 1920s.

During a crucial part of Mussolini's drive for power, the Italian Prime Minister was Giovanni Giolitti. Giolitti was a longstanding liberal: why, he had even taken a neutralist stand in World War I. In terms of contemporary American politics, he could be compared to Ted Kennedy or George McGovern, but it would perhaps be better to go back 50 years and compare him to Franklin Roosevelt, as both Roosevelt and Giolitti spent long years as the head of state.

As a liberal, Giolitti saw himself as a representative of the bourgeois order. Faced after World War I with a revolutionary crisis and the mass upsurge of the Italian workers, Giolitti saw the need to repress the rising revolutionary movement. For this reason, under Giolitti, the government kept fostering the fascist bands, paying retired army officers to organize these bands, looking the other way when these bands looted and killed, etc. Naturally, Giolitti himself engaged in all the proper liberal-labor talk to hoodwink the reformist leaders of the Socialist Party of Italy and the main trade unions. This use of liberal deception was how he maneuvered with the reformists to sabotage the Italian general strike and factory takeover of 1920. The working class movement was to be called off and trust placed in the promises of Giolitti to introduce working class participation in management of the factories through government legislation.

Meanwhile Giolitti kept waving the big stick behind his back.

Giolitti was not himself for a fascist takeover. Indeed, he was one of the major figures of the bourgeois opposition to fascism during the early days of Mussolini's rule. But, as Prime Minister, he not only hadn't fought the fascists, but he had found them useful as a tool to murder revolutionaries and smash the revolutionary movement. The result of Giolitti's activity as Prime Minister had been to pave the way to power for Mussolini. And, in his later activity as a leader of the bourgeois opposition to fascism, he was still more against the masses rising than he was against Mussolini.

Of course, not all liberals are as "left" as Giolitti. Consider the present-day opposition to the brutal, bloody rule of Pinochet in Chile. A bourgeois liberal opposition to Pinochet has developed, led by the Christian Democratic Party. These liberals worked for the original takeover by Pinochet and continued to support his bloody rule for a number of years. But when the mass upsurge began to shake the Pinochet tyranny, the Chilean bourgeoisie began to fear that the anti-fascist struggle would lead to revolution and one section of the bourgeoisie began to support liberal opposition as an alternative to revolution.

Thus there can be no illusions in the anti-fascist fervor of liberalism. But the precise character of any particular liberal group cannot be deduced from general principles, but must be determined concretely. Some liberals and liberal groups pass over to fascism at certain times; other liberals never endorse fascism, although their activity facilitates fascism either directly by fostering fascist groups or through their activities in subverting the mass movement. Other liberals resist fascism to this or that degree, but with the aim of ensuring that capitalism is preserved and the struggle stays within narrow bounds. And there are cases of working masses who really want to fight, although they are under the influence of liberal political affiliations; this case however is unstable, since either they will eventually give up their liberals or their struggle. The exact stand of the liberal groups is important in determining the tactics towards them.

Lenin himself dealt with the particular example of the French Radicals in the pre-World War I period in his brief article "On France" of 1913 (see Collected Works, vol. 36, pp. 253-255). This is an example which is quite typical of liberal bourgeois parties. In this article Lenin protested against "the remarkable act of spinelessness on the part of Gustave Herve", who went over from semi-anarchism to advocating alliance with the bourgeois Radicals for fear of what Lenin called "the present reactionary wave of chauvinism, nationalism and imperialism in France." Lenin pointed out that it was the Socialists (he wrote this prior to World War I, before the Socialist Party went bankrupt and betrayed the working class) who were fighting against the reaction and working for a "proletarian bloc". Meanwhile the liberals were wavering and, in fact, various liberals were supporting or even campaigning for reactionary measures.

Lenin distinguished between the liberals and the reactionaries. He pointed out that "...the Socialists have never refused to support the Radicals to **the extent** that they oppose the reactionaries." (Emphasis in the original) But this does not require the workers to line up with the Radicals. And only by exposing the Radicals could the class-conscious workers detach truly democratic elements from them.

Lenin stressed:

"How can there be a bloc, then, with this shameless bourgeois party of Radicals and 'Radical-Socialists'? Only by agitation **against** it among the masses can the French Socialists **detach** all democratic elements from that party, thereby **obliging** some part of it to go left, towards democracy."

And he pointed out that it was precisely such agitation that would, incidentally, cause many Radicals to think twice about voting for reactionary measures.

He wrote:

"The only serious support for democracy and the Republic in France (as everywhere else) is the masses, the masses of workers and with them also the small peasants, and not the parliamentary politicians, buffoons, careerists and adventurers of the bourgeois parties, who declare themselves 'Radical-Socialists' one day, only to sell out democracy and country the next day..."

And then followed World War I. In this war it was the French Radical leader Clemenceau who was the ultra-chauvinist who campaigned against the government on behalf of an even tougher policy of war to the bitter end and iron suppression of the rebellious workers. And the bourgeoisie granted Clemenceau leadership of France to carry out the ultra-militarist program. It can hardly be thought that the later experience of the French Radicals was any great surprise.

Thus the bourgeois liberals have various stands, from justifying fascism to wringing their hands over it, but they have never been known as fighters against reaction. The class-conscious workers need special tactics to deal with the liberals, but the aim of these tactics is not to cement the the working masses to the liberal bourgeoisie, but to build the unity of the working masses by winning the masses away from liberalism and to a real struggle. Even when the working masses and the liberals find themselves fighting on the same side, it is the aim of communist tactics to ensure the independent mobilization of the working masses and to win them away from illusions in the liberals.

Social-Democracy Also Feared, the Proletarian Revolution More Than It Feared Fascism

As we have seen, the new line of the Seventh Congress centered on the view that social-democracy had become progressive and pro-working class. It held that the only way fascism could be defeated was through an all-encompassing united front from above with the social-democrats; and it strove for this united front at all costs. Further, it held that the political unity of the working class would be restored through merger of the social-democratic and communist parties, and that such mergers would come quite soon.

What did the history of the struggle against fascism show? Were the social-democratic parties and leaders really militant fighters against fascism, to say nothing of allegedly being pro-working class and ready to merge with the communist parties to form new, united revolutionary parties?

As the Seventh Congress took the example of France as its model, it may be useful to see what happened to the French social-democrats, whose party was the SFIO (for French Section of the Workers' (Second) International).

The SFIO ministers in the Popular Front govern-

ment were quite happy to restrict themselves to some mild reforms and to fail to carry out even the promises of the Popular Front program. Indeed, it was the social-democrat Blum, then head of the government, who announced the "pause" in implementing the Popular Front program in February 1937, whereby the government instituted austerity measures and gave up even the pretext of working to carry out its own program and instead called a "pause". Needless to say, the Popular Front government didn't encourage, but on the contrary put a damper on the activity of the working masses against the employers. As well, the social-democrats didn't push through any measures that would have really smashed the fascist bands or purged the French bureaucracy and army of fascism.

It was also Blum who didn't just consent to the strangulation of the anti-fascist fighters in Spain, but who was an initiator, international leader and organizer of the campaign for "non-intervention" in Spain, whereby the bourgeois-democratic countries not only refused to send aid to the Spanish Loyalists (opponents of Franco), but embargoed military supplies to Spain, supposedly as a way to force Nazi Germany and fascist Italy to stop aiding Franco by setting a good example.

But there was more to come. The bankruptcy of the SFIO was fully displayed after the fall of France to the Nazis, when France was divided into one area directly administered by the German Nazis and another region administered by the Nazi puppet regime of Marshall Petain. The majority of its parliamentarians voted on July 10, 1940 to give dictatorial powers to Marshall Petain, as he set up the pro-Nazi Vichy regime. Prominent leaders of the SFIO accepted positions in the Vichy government, including Paul Faure, who had been Secretary of the SFIO, Spinasse, who had been minister of commerce in Blum's Popular Front government, and the trade union leader Rene Belin.

Despite this, the SFIO, like other parties and trade unions, was suppressed and various leaders arrested. But, Dimitrov to the contrary, the repression of social-democracy by the fascists did not convert social-democracy into militant fighters. Instead, the SFIO went to pieces, some leaders going over to fascism while another section of it eventually reorganized and resisted fascism, albeit in the social-democratic manner -- loyal to Anglo-American-French imperialism and serving as an anti-communist buffer to prevent proletarian revolution.

Dimitrov had claimed, at the Seventh Congress, that the working class should have forced the German social-democratic party and leaders to fight. He had implied that it was just the sectarianism of the German communists that had prevented the working class from accomplishing this transformation of social-democracy, and the new line adopted at the Seventh Congress was supposed to eliminate this sectarianism and ensure united action with social-

democracy as a whole in defeating fascism. And the French communists were supposed to be model in implementing the new line.

But it seems that half a decade of the new line with respect to French social-democracy did not prevent it from either working to impose austerity on the French workers, or helping to strangle the Spanish anti-fascist fighters, or seeing many of its leaders go off and join the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

This treachery of the French social-democrats was not something new to the history of world social-democracy. One can recall the Conciliation Pact of 1921 of the Italian social-democratic leaders with Mussolini, where they dealt with his drive to power and his armed smashing up of working class political organizations and trade unions by signing an agreement with him to avoid violence. This served them as another reason to advise the working class to refrain from rising in armed resistance to the fascist hordes, while the fascists promptly ignored the pact and continued terrorizing one town after another.

It might be worthwhile to take a brief look at the experience of German social-democracy and its role in facilitating the rise to power of Hitler. What was the real reason that they had not united with the communists to fight against Hitler's take-over?

The German social-democratic leaders, in face of the crisis that was building up in Germany and the rise of communist strength, were more concerned with avoiding revolution and the mass rising of the working class in struggle than with fighting the fascists. The German social-democratic leaders wished to keep their opposition to fascism well within the bounds of bourgeois politics and bourgeois maneuvering.

Thus the German social-democratic leaders refused united front proposals that were made by the German communists at various crucial moments. For example, the German communists had been willing to throw themselves into battle against the illegal action of the reactionary German government (not yet the Hitler government) in July 1932 of removing the Social-Democratic government of Prussia, the most powerful province of Germany, but the social-democrats preferred not to raise the working class in struggle and instead went through various futile legal maneuvers. The German communists also proposed, after Hitler's rise to power at the beginning of 1933, to organize joint action with the social-democrats, such as a general strike, but the social-democrats still refused, preferring to believe that Hitler would have to rule constitutionally.

Thus, consider the attitude to the Nazis of Severing, a major Social-Democratic leader, who as Prussian Minister of the Interior (i.e. police-chief) had been involved in shooting down communist May Day demonstrations in 1929 and in banning the Red Front Fighters League. In mid-1932 he stated

that "The Social Democratic Party, no less than the Catholic Party, is strongly inclined to see Herr Hitler's Nazis share the Government responsibility." (Cited in Dutt's Fascism and Social Revolution, p. 149) What an anti-fascist strategy! The social-democrats believed they could tame Hitler by having him take power as part of a coalition, before he had a majority.

When Hitler came to power on Jan. 30, 1933 the social-democratic leaders continued this line. They declared that Hitler had come to power in a constitutional fashion, and hence he would have to rule that way. Therefore the working class shouldn't rise up to fight him, but should preserve all the necessary legalities.

Various leaders of the social-democratic party and trade unions tried to reach an accommodation with Hitler. Thus, just before the dissolution of the social-democratic trade unions, their leader Leipart wrote to Hitler, begging him to come to an agreement, stating:

"The social tasks facing the trade unions must be carried out, no matter what the government regime may be ... they are prepared to collaborate with the employer's organizations ... recognize government control ... They offer help to the government and parliament [i.e. the Hitler-controlled Reichstag] with their knowledge and experience." (Cited in 1933 in Fritz Heckert's article "Why Hitler in Germany?" in the C.I. Journal, vol.10 #10)

The political leaders of the German Social-Democratic Party weren't any better. Well after the Hitler terror had begun, on May 17, 1933, the parliamentary group of the German social-democrats joined in a unanimous acclamation of Hitler (the Communist Party had already been expelled from the Reichstag) and voted for the government resolution. (Dutt, p. 150) And Wels, leader of the German Social-Democratic Party, spoke in the Reichstag, just prior to the dissolution of his party, proclaiming that:

"The social-democrats are those who helped to promote Hitler to his present position. ... The social-democrats fully subscribe to the program of foreign policy outlined by Hitler in his declarations." (Cited by Heckert, op. cit.)

Indeed, Wels had even resigned from the executive of the Second International in protest against "atrocious stories" against Hitler. Of course, this hardly meant that the Second International was seriously mobilizing against Hitlerism.

With the leadership of the German social-democrats firmly in the hands of such advocates of conciliation of Hitler, it can be seen why no united front came into existence between the communists and social-democrats to fight Hitler. It can also be imagined what kind of concession would have been necessary to achieve a united front. The social-democratic leadership regarded a united front not as

a way to fight Hitler, but simply as a way to stop criticism of themselves, and this was the only type of united front they were willing to accept.

As a result of the attempt of various German social-democratic leaders to come to terms with Hitler, another section of social-democratic leaders separated from them. They were forced underground or into exile by the Hitlerite repression. But they advocated opposition to Hitler in the social-democratic fashion, and they still obstructed the development of the anti-fascist struggle. The gulf between the social-democratic leaders and the social-democratic workers at the base was wider than ever.

It can be seen that the fate of German social-democracy was remarkably close to the later fate of French social-democracy. The new line of Dimitrov had made little difference. In both cases the social-democratic parties went into crisis, with one section of leaders going over to fascism or to frenzied attempts at reaching accommodation with fascism. In both cases another section of leaders had to reorganize the party.

Thus the basis of Dimitrov's tactics, that social-democracy had changed its nature, was a fraud. Just as before, social-democracy acted to subvert the working class struggle and subordinate the working masses to the bourgeoisie.

The Bolsheviks in the Fight Against the Kornilov Revolt

The new line of the Seventh Congress flew directly in the face of Leninism. Dimitrov did his best to create the impression that the communist movement had no experience of struggle against reaction — at least, not successful experience — and so new tactics were needed. In fact, such experience did exist. There was the experience of the long struggle of the Bolsheviks against the dictatorial regime of the tsars. And as well, the Bolsheviks also had experience of the struggle against a reactionary coup aimed at a bourgeois-democratic state. And it is particularly this latter experience of the fight against the Kornilov revolt which it will be quite worthwhile to go into at this point, for it refutes one after another of the theses put forward by Dimitrov.

First, let us recall what the Kornilov revolt was. Kornilov was a reactionary tsarist general, retained by the Provisional Government after the Feb. revolution of 1917 that overthrew the tsar. The Kornilov revolt took place between the February and October revolutions, during the period of the bourgeois-democratic Kerensky regime.

Kerensky himself, on behalf of the reformists supporting the bourgeois Provisional Government, at first welcomed the Kornilov plot for a military dictatorship and encouraged it. At the last movement, however, he vacillated again and opposed the Kornilov plot.

The Bolsheviks made use of the fight against Kornilov to invigorate the revolutionary movement. The defense of Petrograd against Kornilov brought forth a mass upsurge of the working class. The Bolsheviks did not ignore the difference between the reformists and the Kornilovites although they knew that Kerensky had conspired with Kornilov, nor did they surrender to illusions in Kerensky. They did not shrug their shoulders at Kornilov and take a passive stand, nor did they abandon their course for a socialist revolution.

Since the struggle against the Kornilov revolt provides a good example of the Bolshevik attitude to many of the questions confused by Dimitrov and the Seventh Congress, it will be worthwhile to examine a somewhat lengthy quotation from Lenin on the struggle against Kornilov. It is not being suggested that this will provide a stereotyped pattern that answers all the questions of the struggle against fascism under all conditions. But it does provide an example of how Leninist tactics work out in one concrete situation, shows various complexities that can arise, and refutes many of Dimitrov's opportunist dogmas.

Lenin, discussing the Kornilov revolt, wrote the following in his letter. "To the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P.":

"The Kornilov revolt is a most unexpected (unexpected at such a moment and in such a form) and downright unbelievably sharp turn in events.

"Like every sharp turn, it calls for a revision and change of tactics. And as with every revision, we must be extra-cautious not to become unprincipled.

"It is my conviction that those who become unprincipled are people who ... slide into defecism or ... into a **bloc** with the S.R.s [Kerensky was an S.R.], into **supporting** the Provisional Government. Their attitude is absolutely wrong and unprincipled. ...

"**Even now** we must not support Kerensky's government. This is unprincipled. We may be asked: aren't we going to fight against Kornilov? Of course we must! But this is not the same thing; there is a dividing line here, which is being stepped over by some Bolsheviks who fall into compromise and allow themselves to be **carried away** by the course of events.

"We shall fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, **just as** Kerensky's **troops** do, but we do not support Kerensky. **On the contrary**, we expose his weakness. There is the difference. It is rather a subtle difference, but it is highly essential and must not be forgotten.

"What, then, constitutes our change of tactics after the Kornilov revolt?

"We are changing the **form** of our struggle against Kerensky. Without in the least relaxing our hostility towards him, without taking

back a single word said against him, without renouncing the task of overthrowing him, we say that we must **take into account** the present situation. We shall not overthrow Kerensky right now. We shall approach the task of fighting against him **in a different way**, namely, we shall point out to the people (who are fighting against Kornilov) Kerensky's **weakness and vacillation**. That has been done in the past **as well**. Now, however, it has become the **all-important** thing and this constitutes the change.

"The change, further, is that the **all-important** thing now has become the intensification of our campaign for some kind of 'partial demands' to be presented to Kerensky: arrest Milyukov, arm the Petrograd workers, summon the Kronstadt, Vyborg and Helsingfors troops to Petrograd, dissolve the Duma, arrest Rodzyanko, legalize the transfer of the landed estates to the peasants, introduce workers' control over grain and factories, etc., etc. We must present these demands not only to Kerensky, and **not so much** to Kerensky, as to the workers, soldiers and peasants who have been **carried away** by the course of the struggle against Kornilov. We must keep up their **enthusiasm**,... The 'Left' S.R.s must be especially urged on in this direction.

"It would be wrong to think that we have moved farther away from the task of the proletariat winning power. No. We have come very close to it, **not directly**, but from the side. **At the moment** we must campaign not so much directly against Kerensky, as **indirectly** against him, namely, by demanding a more and more active, truly revolutionary war against Kornilov. The development of this war alone can lead us to power, but we must **speak** of this as little as possible in our propaganda (remembering very well that even tomorrow events may put power into our hands, and then we shall not relinquish it). ... We must relentlessly fight against phrases about the defense of the country, about a united front of revolutionary democrats, about supporting the Provisional Government, etc., etc., since they are just empty **phrases**. We must say: now is the time for **action**; you S.R. and Menshevik gentlemen have long since worn those phrases threadbare. (Collected Works, vol. 25, pp. 285-9, emphasis as in the original.)

The Kornilov revolt, just as the fascist offensive in various countries, necessitated a temporary change of tactics. The example of Bolshevik tactics shows how flexible tactics are combined with the determined upholding of the revolutionary struggle.

First of all, we see that the struggle against the reactionary Kornilov caused a change in the tone and form of agitation against Kerensky. The Bolshe-

viks could not simply go ahead with the former way of exposing Kerensky. They had to concentrate attention on the struggle to beat back the Kornilov plot.

But this did not mean abandoning the content of the criticism of Kerensky. Not only did Lenin stress that not a single word of criticism of Kerensky should be renounced, but the task was to press home to the masses Kerensky's complete incapacity to deal with the Kornilov plot.

In this regard, we see an example of the falsity of Dimitrov's propaganda that a fascist threat means that the immediate issue is bourgeois democracy or fascism, and that the socialist revolution must be put aside. The issue was not supporting Kerensky or the Provisional Government, but mobilizing the masses against the Kornilov threat. Lenin did not call for revising the attitude to the Provisional Government on the grounds that it was better than Kornilov, but for using the struggle against Kornilov to push forward the revolutionary movement. It was precisely the mass mobilization, not the Kerensky government, that was the real barrier to Kornilov. And the intensification of the struggle against Kornilov would lead to an upsurge of the revolution and exposure of the hollowness of Kerensky and the opportunists.

Lenin points out that, in the particular circumstances around the Kornilov revolt, it was not correct to agitate on the relationship between the fighting Kornilov and the coming Bolshevik assumption of power. But, nevertheless, it was essential to maintain the strategy leading to the socialist revolution, and in fact the struggle against Kornilov was bringing Russia even closer to socialist revolution.

This is particularly significant as the revolutionary process never proceeds in a straight line. As the revolution mounts, so does the counterrevolutionary frenzy of the bourgeoisie, and it seeks for such saviors as military dictators, fascists, and so forth. If one has to wait for a "pure" revolution, which proceeds nicely after the stage of pure bourgeois democracy has been reached and all possible threats from the right to bourgeois democracy have been defeated, then such a revolution will never come. There was Kornilov in Russia, the Kapp putsch in Germany, the rise of the fascists in Italy, and so on and so forth. The Kornilov phenomenon, which at first sight looks so particular to Russia and to the Russia of a particular time and circumstances at that,, actually is a rather general phenomenon, which has regularly come up in times of revolutionary crisis.

There are other issues too that are clarified by Lenin's views. He is particularly contemptuous of the empty phrases which flowed from the opportunists in such abundance. Instead of actual fighting Kornilov, the Mensheviks and other opportunists used the occasion to feed the people on verbal flourish-

es. How this reminds one of the empty phrases which Dimitrov and company wanted to use as the basis of united front politics with the social-democrats. How it reminds one of Thorez praising the liberal politician Rucart for fancy phrases about the loyalty of the French armed forces to democracy when in fact the army, and the republican institutions in general, were honeycombed with reactionaries. Revolutionary communist policy is to teach the people to distrust fancy phrases and to look at what is actually being done in the world.

And the fight against Kornilov shows the need to get rid of petrified or rigid tactics. It was only by adjusting immediately to the burning political task of the moment — the fight against Kornilov — and by knowing how to adjust the various fronts of

work in light of this task that the Bolsheviks were able to push forward the revolutionary movement.

Thus, on one front after another, the struggle against Kornilov provides a refutation of Dimitrov's theses: it shows that the issue isn't choosing between the existing bourgeois-democratic state and the fascist threat, but developing the revolutionary movement against the fascists; that the work for the socialist revolution cannot be set aside; that the struggle against social-democracy has to continue just as vigorously as ever, but with different forms; that deeds, not fancy words, are what count; and that the revolutionary Leninist principles fully apply to the fight against reactionary or fascist coups. <>

AGAINST THE TROTSKYITE CRITIQUE OF THE SEVENTH CONGRESS

Today the pro-Soviet revisionists, the pro-Chinese revisionists and the Trotskyites are all liquidators. They dress up liberal-labor and reformist politics in communist colors. They oppose the building of the independent movement of the working class and instead try to hitch the revolutionary movement to the left-wing of the Democratic Party and to the labor bureaucrats. They differ among themselves on details and on which liberal politicians or labor bureaucrats to work with, but they share a common overall platform of vulgar liquidationism.

One of the favorite methods of the liquidators is to justify trailing behind the liberal Democrats or the labor bureaucrats with united front rhetoric. Some of the liquidators rely on wrong traditions from the Seventh Congress of the CI.

But there are also those liquidators who oppose the Seventh Congress while in fact implementing a similar line. The Trotskyites are an example of such liquidators. Trotskyism is utterly social-democratic and Menshevik in nature, and the American Trotskyites are among the most servile followers of the left-wing of the Democratic Party and of the labor bureaucracy. But they try to cover their treachery by phrasemongering, including their denunciation of "popular fronts" and of the Seventh World Congress of the CI.

In fact, the Trotskyite theses actually agree with the Seventh Congress on such a fundamental point as support for social-democracy. Of course, by the time the Seventh Congress was held, the Trotskyites had the mud-slinging tactics of simply saying the opposite of everything the CI said, but the basic agreement of the stands of Trotskyism and the Seventh Congress on the role of social-democracy, for example, is clear.

The anti-Leninist Trotskyite stands on questions related to the Seventh Congress can be divided roughly into four parts.

1. There are those stands where the Trotskyites agree with the Seventh Congress, despite all their cursing of this congress.

2. There are those stands where the Trotskyites disagree with the CI both before and after the Seventh Congress. This includes the question of partial demands, the struggle against fascism, national liberation movements, etc.

3. There are those hypocritical stands of the Trotskyites which have nothing to do with their liquidationist practice, such as their alleged opposition to unity with the bourgeois liberals.

4. The Trotskyites mark their hatred for the CI from the 7th Congress, but this is just a pretext since they started their war on the CI several years earlier.

Let us briefly examine these points.

On common stands of Trotskyism and the Seventh Congress

First of all, the most basic stand underlying the Seventh Congress was its reversal of the previous Leninist position of the CI on relentless struggle against social-democracy. The Seventh CI, prettified social-democracy, held that it would fight militantly against fascism and for the immediate demands of the working class, and that the struggle against fascism should be conducted in such a way as to ensure unity with them.

This stand towards social-democracy is completely in accord with the basic stand of Trotskyism. Trotsky had cursed the CI bitterly for its struggle against social-democracy in the years prior to the

Seventh Congress. Turning truth on its head, he denounced the German communists as responsible for the split in the working class movement in Germany that paralyzed the working class and prevented effective resistance to Hitler's takeover. He had to admit that the social-democratic leaders were on their knees before fascism and the bourgeoisie, but he tried to shrug this off, claiming that the persecution which fascism will let fall on the social-democratic parties and leaders would make them fight. This argument is, of course, exactly in line with Dimitrov's view that the rising danger of fascism changed the nature of social-democracy. And it has nothing to do with the actual practice of social-democracy.

It should be noted that Trotsky historically opposed the struggle of Lenin and the Bolsheviks against opportunism and denounced Lenin in the most bitter terms for his alleged splitting and factionalist activities. Later he cursed the CI in the same way, this time concentrating on the CI's struggle against social-democracy.

As well, the Seventh Congress denigrated party-building. It should be noted that Trotskyism is also noted for its anti-party views and practices. From the start, Trotsky cursed the Leninist principles of party-building as creating a "barracks regime". The formless and undisciplined nature of Trotskyism is one of the reasons why it can never offer any serious opposition to the bourgeoisie but can only trail after what is fashionable.

The Seventh Congress and Trotsky differed on exactly how they conceived party organization. Trotskyism always longed after the social-democratic model, whereas the Seventh Congress, despite introducing liquidationist elements into the communist movement, wished to retain a certain solidity. But it was moving in the direction of the social-democratic party, as the plan for the united parties with social-democracy shows, and in so far as it did this it was narrowing the gap with the Trotskyite conception.

Trotskyite Stands Which Differed from Those of the CI Both Before and After the Seventh Congress

Trotskyism is an utterly anti-Leninist trend. Although the various Trotskyite groups, and the writings of Trotsky himself for that matter, are marked by their inconsistency and hodgepodge of views, there are certain basic anti-Leninist features. And various of these features differed from both the Leninist stands of the CI before the Seventh Congress and the particular erroneous stands of the CI after the Seventh Congress, as they comprised particular pet anti-Leninist stands of Trotsky.

For example, Trotsky made a hash of the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the struggle for partial demands and the minimum program. He attacks "minimum demands" as reformist, as lacking a bridge to the

maximum demands, and as essentially obsolete in the present era and replaces them with radical-sounding phrases about "transitional demands" and a "transitional program". In this way he confused both the issue of partial demands and of transitional demands, an issue explained well, by the way, at the Sixth Congress of the CI.

Trotsky's denigration of partial demands and immediate struggles went against the CI view of utilizing these struggles. It showed he had no idea of what actually constituted reformism. At the same time, Trotsky would then rehabilitate the same demands that he had cursed as mere minimum demands by finding a way to christen them as transitional demands. In this way and others he would find a way to support the particular campaigns of the social-democratic parties who allegedly, despite their reformist mentality, were putting forward transitional demands that were revolutionary in essence.

Trotskyism's confusion on partial demands in general was paralleled by its confusion on the question of the struggle for democratic rights and the struggle against fascism. The Trotskyites as well have many problems dealing with the national liberation movements and the democratic revolutions of the dependent nations. In their recent practice, they sometimes negate these struggles directly with left phrasemongering, while at other times they glorify various bourgeois nationalist or even outright reactionary regimes as playing a good role.

Trotskyite Hypocrisy to Cover Their Liquidationism

One of the basic features of Trotsky's political practice and of Trotskyism in general is the over-abundant use of left phrasemongering to cover up capitulation to the bourgeoisie or anti-communism.

For example, the Trotskyites curse "popular frontism" and the Seventh Congress for making concessions to the liberal bourgeoisie. But the examination of the actual practice today of the Trotskyite groups shows that they are themselves on their knees before the liberal bourgeoisie. Some go out of their way to invite liberal politicians to demonstrations and most all of them kowtow to the labor bureaucrats as their way of building a "labor party" (an example of which can be seen in the liberal bourgeois British Labor Party, which almost all Trotskyites buzz around in awe). An interesting example of Trotskyite treachery was the Spartacists, who think nothing of disrupting demonstrations because they are not pure, giving the call to protect the Democratic Party convention of 1984 from alleged right-wing threats.

This present stand of the Trotskyites is no accident. It was true before too. Since the Trotskyites are advocates of unity with social-democracy and modeled themselves on social-democratic lines, they can not in reality separate themselves from the

practice of the social-democratic parties, which is unity with the liberal bourgeoisie. Only by fighting against social-democracy can one free oneself from dependence from the liberals, and the Trotskyites were extremely hostile to such a struggle against social-democracy and used to denounce the CI up and down for it.

The Trotskyites Used the Seventh Congress As a Pretext

"Orthodox" Trotskyism dates its total condemnation of the CI from the Seventh Congress. But this was just a pretext. In fact, the Trotskyites had been waging all-out war on the CI for several years. Already several years earlier they had adopted the slogan of working for a "political revolution" in the Soviet Union, i.e. of working to overthrow the government in the USSR. Only Trotskyite phrasemongers could maintain that they were loyal to the CI at the same time as they were working for a "political revolution" in the USSR against the CPSU and as they engaged in wrecking activity against the other sections of the CI as well.

The Trotskyites had, in fact, already lost the struggle in the communist parties several years

earlier. They then turned to the tactic of working inside the social-democratic parties, as Trotsky imitated his early political career when he often worked with the Mensheviks and anti-party liquidators and denounced Lenin. Only now he worked with the sold-out social-democrats and shouted himself hoarse against "Stalinism".

By the mid-1930s this Trotskyite strategy had met fiasco as well. The social-democratic parties were expelling the Trotskyites. In order to put a good cover on this business, Trotsky used the pretext of his opposition to the Seventh Congress to start the process of bringing out the Trotskyite "Four International" into the open. Far from a principled opposition to the new turn in the international communist movement, Trotsky was simply engaging in his practice of cursing whatever the communist movement said.

Finally, we reproduce below the resolution denouncing Trotskyism from the Second Congress of our Party. (It first appeared in the collection of documents from the Second Congress printed in The Workers' Advocate for Jan. 1, 1984.) This resolution gives a brief, overall picture of Trotskyite opportunism. <>

From the Resolutions of the Second Congress of the MLP, USA AGAINST TROTSKYISM

Trotskyism is another of the opportunist international trends working to undermine the revolutionary working class movement. The Trotskyites, both internationally and domestically, and often within a given Trotskyite group, are divided up into many different varieties and shades. They make up a hodgepodge of opportunist groupings influenced by social-democracy, revisionism, and every sort of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois political trend. One thing which they all hold in common, however, is that they all call themselves followers of Leon Trotsky. So to understand the nature of contemporary Trotskyism it is useful to refer to the ideological and political characteristics of this notorious renegade from communism.

** From the early days of his political career, a most important feature of Trotsky's stand was that he cursed Leninism and Bolshevism. In 1903 the Marxist party of the Russian working class became divided between its revolutionary Marxist wing known as the Bolsheviks and led by Lenin, and its reformist and opportunist wing known as the Mensheviks. From that time on Trotsky was bitterly hostile to Lenin and the Bolsheviks and raved against Lenin as the leader of the "reactionary wing" of the party. While he rebuked the struggle against opportunism as

an alleged expression of "factionalism," and while he regarded himself as allegedly being above factions, actually Trotsky vacillated wildly between factions as he adopted an essentially Menshevik stand. He repeatedly joined on the side of the Mensheviks and liquidators against the Bolsheviks.

Trotsky didn't join the Bolshevik Party until the summer of 1917, the eve of the October Socialist Revolution. But even inside the Bolsheviks' ranks he was in continual conflict with Lenin and his Bolshevik line. He became a leader of the anti-Leninist "opposition."

After Lenin's death Trotsky posed as a great Leninist. Now, instead of directly cursing Leninism, as he had done for the two decades previous, he cursed "Stalinism" in order to continue his crusade against everything that Leninism stands for. Trotsky became one of the bitterest enemies of the Communist International and degenerated to the depths of organizing counter-revolutionary subversion against socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat in the USSR.

** His repeated denunciations of the Leninist struggle against opportunism were a yellow thread running through Trotsky's infamous political career. Trotsky played the role of a shield for the Menshe-

viks and other opportunists and he periodically made common cause with them against the revolutionary Leninists. It was Trotsky who tried to put together the ill-famed "August bloc" of all the liquidators to fight the Bolsheviks. And later Trotsky cursed the fight waged by the Communist International against the treachery of social-democracy.

** A particular hallmark of Trotsky's anti-Leninist and opportunist stands was that he covered them in highfalutin phraseology. He was a master of "revolutionary" phrases that cost him nothing. Under this "revolutionary" verbiage Trotsky pursued his accommodation with the reformist social-democrats and his struggle against the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists.

** Trotsky held special hatred for Lenin's principles concerning the role and nature of the proletarian party. He fought the Leninist concepts of democratic centralism, of building a proletarian party with the iron discipline and single will that is required for the class war against the bourgeoisie. Trotsky called Lenin's Bolshevik system of organization a "barracks regime" and a "dictatorship" over the intellectuals by the workers. He abhorred proletarian discipline and espoused an aristocratic petty-bourgeois individualism. Trotsky advocated the typically social-democratic concepts of the party as a loose and amorphous grouping of divergent factions and trends.

Trotsky's theories on the revolution were anti-Leninist through and through.

** Under the signboard of "permanent revolution," Trotsky turned the Marxist concept of the uninterrupted nature of the revolution, and the growing over of the democratic revolution into the socialist revolution, into what Lenin called an "absurdity." Trotsky's "permanent revolution" meant skipping over the democratic revolution under conditions where it was a historical necessity, such as in tsarist Russia. He considered the peasantry to be one reactionary mass and, like all Mensheviks, he rejected the idea of the proletariat becoming the leader of the peasant masses in the democratic revolution.

** Connected to this was Trotsky's hostility towards the national liberation struggles and democratic revolutions among the oppressed peoples under the yoke of imperialism. In particular, Trotsky theorized against the Leninist program of the proletariat becoming the champion and leader of the liberation movement of the oppressed peoples.

** Trotsky rejected Lenin's theory of the uneven development of imperialism and the possibility of building socialism in one (or several) countries. He theorized that it was not possible to build socialism in one (or several) countries without simultaneous socialist revolutions throughout Europe. From the outset he combatted Lenin's program for building socialism in the USSR and preached defeatism.

** Trotsky made a mockery of the Marxist-Leninist teachings on the struggles for partial demands. On the one hand, Trotsky made use of radical-sounding phrases to belittle the importance of the revolutionary movement of the workers' struggles for partial demands and to denounce these struggles as alleged manifestations of reformism. On the other hand, Trotsky took up all the reformist utopias advocated by the social-democrats for patching up capitalism. He painted up these run-of-the-mill reformist schemes as being allegedly incompatible with capitalist rule, and in other flaming "revolutionary" colors. This was the content of Trotsky's anti-Leninist distortions of the concept of the transitional program.

** Trotsky put forward a number of other confused and contradictory theories. He vacillated to the right and to the left and snatched bits and pieces of ideas from different and even warring trends. The underlying consistency in Trotsky's theorizing was its Menshevik and social-democratic essence and its hostility towards Marxist-Leninist communism.

Contemporary Trotskyism has many variations and subtrends. Some Trotskyite groupings still subscribe to many of Trotsky's particular anti-Leninist theories. Others have dropped a number of Trotsky's absurdities as unneeded baggage. All the Trotskyite groupings are characterized by their lack of ideological coherence; by their mimicking of whatever is fashionable; and by their habit of attaching themselves within the general ideological and political orbit of the stronger social-reformist trends -- social-democracy and revisionism.

Some of the other features of contemporary Trotskyism include:

** The Trotskyites are totally liquidationist. They abhor the very idea of building a solid Marxist-Leninist vanguard party of the working class. Their concept of the proletarian party, if they have any such concept, is something of a debating society made up of a broad and loose federation of factions. Despite the revolutionary phrasemongering of some, the Trotskyites trail helplessly after the labor bureaucrats and other opportunist forces of bourgeois influence on the working class.

** In the past, when the Soviet Union was still a bastion of socialism, the Trotskyites were among the most rabid enemies of the socialist system being constructed in the USSR. They cursed the first land of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "degenerated workers' state." But now, with the restoration of capitalism and the emergence of social-imperialism in the Soviet Union, their term "degenerated workers' state" has become a term of endearment. Most Trotskyites have become big apologists of Soviet revisionism, just as they merge with all revisionism generally.

** The Trotskyites oppose the national libera-