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UNITED FRONT FOR GASTONIA

Fight the Frame-up! Defend the Right to Organize and Strike!

The change of venue and the delay in the trial of the Gastonia strikers is a slight advantage for the defense of which the most should be made. It offers a breathing space in the preparation and organization of the defense movement, provides a little more time to rally a broader and more powerful movement and to correct errors in the defense tactics. All this is important and valuable, for a defense movement before a trial has ten times more significance than after conviction. This is the lesson of all great labor cases from Moyer and Haywood to Sacco and Vanzetti.

The change of venue also has a value in the removal of the trial from the lynching atmosphere systematically worked up against the prisoners in Gaston County. But this should not be the occasion for illusions. The capitalist courts remain what they were—instruments of capitalist frame-up justice—and the optimistic predictions of a "fair trial" by the Civil Liberties Union have to be rejected out of hand because they tend to disarm the workers in a bitter life and death class fight. To condemn this attitude it is not necessary to represent the change of venue and the delay as a blow at the defense. This is merely irresponsible foolishness, since the defense fought for this decision. Fundamentally the case stands where it stood before, with the class relations and the main issues the same and with a slight improvement in the position of the defense.

The Gastonia case is a labor case, and a case of the classic frame-up of the workers. The right to organize and strike and the fight against the frame-up system are the real issues involved. All the evidence shows that the police militia and thugs of the mill owners were the instigators of violence against the workers. There is no proof that the fatal shots were fired by the strikers. No one has been so identified, no one has admitted such responsibility and it is certain that no such proof can be brought against the strike leaders. The case thus has all the characteristics of a typical labor frame-up.

The whole nature of the case indicates the rallying slogans of the defense movement:

Fight the Frame-up!

Safeguard the workers' right to organize and strike!

Slogans are the guiding line for action and it is of the utmost importance that they be formulated correctly. In our opinion it is not correct to make "the right of self defense" the central slogan of the campaign. An entirely different set of circumstances would be necessary for this. Such a leading slogan would apply only if the actual responsibility for the fatal shooting were clearly established and assumed by the defendants. This is not the case, and in the absence of these conditions it is false to put this slogan as the guiding line of the campaign. It tends to narrow down the movement of defense and it assumes a revolutionary atmosphere and class development which does not exist. It sounds "radical", but being false and unrealistic it does not serve radical ends.

The fundamental interests of the working class are at stake in the Gastonia trial as they were in the time of Moyer and Haywood, Ettore and Giovanitti, Mooney and Billings, Centralia and Sacco and Vanzetti. The nature of the case and the interests of the working class and of the prisoners call for a broad united front movement of defense. This idea must be the central strategy of the campaign.

United front movements do not spring out of the ground. They must be organized. How is it to be organized in this case—exclusively from below? No, this is a wrong approach. The united front from below alone follows only from the failure to secure any cooperation from leading elements in non-Communist organizations, after a conscientious attempt has been made, and after refusal of the leaders to cooperate in a united action has been definitely established before the workers belonging to and following the other organizations. It cannot be said that such is the case now in regard to Gastonia because the attempt has not been made.

On the other hand, numerous organizations in the working class movement—I. W. W., the new progressive movement, numerous unions, S. P., Anarchists, S. L. P., etc.—have issued declarations of support for

the Gastonia defendants. As matters stand now those elements in these organizations who really want to help, and there are no doubt many of them, are not organized and those who are not sincere in their declarations are furnished with a good excuse for doing nothing. The right move by the International Labor Defense which is in charge of the defense can straighten out the situation, mobilize those who want to help and show up those who do not.

The I. L. D. should make formal proposals to all organizations in the working class movement for united action regardless of political differences. Along with such formal proposals to the official leadership of the various organizations there should be a public appeal to all workers to cooperate in a genuine united front movement. The organization machinery for the united front movement should be "United Front Gastonia Defense Conferences" patterned on the Sacco-Vanzetti Conferences, the Passaic Strike Conferences and the old Moyer-Haywood Conferences, all of which followed the same line. It is false to attempt to form these conferences as direct adjuncts of the I. L. D. This procedure, as experience has already shown, attracts only organizations under the direct influence of the Party, thrusts aside all elements at war with the Communists and leaves the conservative workers untouched. Under the present conditions a really broad and powerful movement cannot be organized on this line.

The Gastonia case is a matter of desperate seriousness for the entire labor movement. Workers' lives and basic working class rights are at stake. Such issues cannot be a factional monopoly or plaything. Factionalism has no place in such great issues of the

class struggle. Faction interests are alien and hostile to the interests of the case.

The Communist League of America, in common with all class conscious elements in the labor movement, wants to take part in a united movement for the defense of Gastonia. If we have resorted to criticism of the management of the case it is only because the management has thus far failed to lead in the direction of a united movement, because it has violated the basic lines necessary for the organization of such a movement, because it has followed a sectarian policy inimical to the interests of the workers' fight for the Gastonia prisoners, because it has pushed aside the cooperation of those who want to help. The rejection of the delegates of the Communist League of America at the Chicago Conference of the I. L. D. is a case in point—an example of criminal factionalism for which we know no precedent in American labor history. The failure to reply to the letter of the I. W. W. of July 18th offering cooperation, as printed in "Solidarity" for August 14th, likewise deserves the strongest condemnation. The Communists rightly criticized the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee for its narrow policy, but this committee never made the mistake of directly refusing the cooperation of any group.

We repeat again the sentiment of all class conscious workers: Organize all progressive forces in the labor movement—and all honest sympathizing elements—into a single united movement for the defeat of the Gastonia frame-up and the defense of the workers' right to organize and strike.

National Committee

The Communist League of America (Opposition)

Danger Signals in the East

A certain sharpening of the situation is evident in the present dispute between the Soviet Union and the Chinese counter-revolution around the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Troop mobilizations on both sides of the Manchurian border are being increased. Shots have been exchanged by contending patrols, in which a number of Red Army soldiers were killed. The opposing forces consisted for the most part of White Guard Russians who are operating against the Soviets with the covert support of Chiang Kai-Shek and Co. The Chinese reactionaries, and the White Guards in particular, are working hard to involve Russia in a war that may have tremendous consequences.

Nevertheless, the main indications point to the unlikelihood of a serious war situation developing. The imperialist press, and the imperialist powers, while they jockey for more advantageous positions in the dispute, give no direct support to the action of the Chinese. Russia has been maneuvered into the unfortunate position where it is defending its economic claims to property located on foreign soil and to the inviolability of treaty rights. This is a dangerous position for the Workers' Republic.

The imperialists are opposed to China's seizure of the railway because it strengthens the precedents for similar actions against the concessions and extra-territoriality "rights" of Japan, England, France and the United States. The imperialists want to use Russia's present attitude to justify their hold upon the economic and financial resources of China, and rob the Soviet Union (and the revolutionary movement as a whole) of the moral basis for protesting against these holdings.

Every worker will have as his first duty to lend every ounce of support to the Soviet Union to defend it from intervention and attack. But Russia will not find it possible to arouse the sentiments of the workers of the world to fight for Russian economic claims outside of the Soviet Union, on foreign soil. The fact that the railway was built by Russian (czarist) money, or that Russian participation was guaranteed in a treaty with the reactionary and defunct government of Chang Tso Lin, or that the railway is necessary for Russian transports to Vladivostock, are not valid arguments for a revolutionary workers' government.

From the proletarian point of view, Russia has as little claim to the railway as Chiang Kai-Shek; it belongs to the workers and peasants of China who will justly claim it when they come to power. Unless this is stated frankly and openly we should be deceiving and misleading the workers.

We are opposed to the atmosphere in which the dispute is being conducted by Stalin. It is the atmosphere of bourgeois diplomacy, in which the existence of negotiations (that were actually carried on between Russia and China for a time) are denied. It has nothing in common with the exemplary conduct of the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk in 1918, charged with the internationalist spirit of Lenin and Trotsky. In 1918, the open and frank appeals of the Bolsheviks really led to the defeat of the German Junkers and the beginning of the German revolution. Stalin's present policy in China will never yield such a harvest. The Chinese proletariat and peasantry cannot and will not be rallied to overthrow the counter-revolution, to support the Soviet Union, to the standard of socialism by appealing to them to fight for Russian economic claims in China.

Neither is it correct to say that the main danger of war now exists in an attack on the Soviet Union by imperialism. The main danger of war today exists primarily in the growing intensity of the conflicts between British and American imperialism. The chief danger to the dictatorship of the proletariat lies in the steady penetration of Russian economic life by imperialist concessionaries, the growing strength and influence of the Kulak, the Nepman and the state bureaucracy, of the Thermidorian and counter-revolutionary elements in the country. That is what threatens the Russian revolution most acutely today.

The Stalinist press has nothing to say in answer to our viewpoint than to foully accuse the Opposition of being "allies of Chang Kai-Shek". This will deceive no one. When the Opposition was demanding a break with Chiang Kai-Shek as an enemy of the revolution in China and Russia, when Chiang Kai-Shek was strangling the Chinese working class and peasantry and beginning to drown it in a sea of blood, it was Stalin and Bucharin who maintained a most intimate alliance with him, who glorified him as the "revolution-

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