

The Communists in the South

By HUGO OEHLER

(9) By the time the new forces had arrived, July 12th, Dunne, Wagenknecht, Drew, Martin and others had started the work of reorganizing and preparing the ground for the defense of our leaders in jail. The worst of the reaction had subsided and the new cycle was well on its way. This followed the indictments and called for organization around this issue. Our main office had been moved to Charlotte, a larger town some thirty miles from Gastonia. We collected the scattered forces, issued dues cards to new members and started collecting initiation from new members and dues from old ones. The Bessemer City and Gastonia meetings were enlarged and spread over the entire area to every mill town, step by step in an organized fashion. Organizational work of establishing mill locals was started. Our first objective was a conference at Bessemer City July 28, a day before the opening of the trial.

(j) We readily realized that the technical situation of the N.T.W.U. was a handicap, that our National Office was in a bad shape—a reflection already of the new line of mechanical swing from the reactionary unions to new unions. According to our constitution all applications must be sent to N.Y. from the South and they made out dues cards and mailed them back. In stable, well-functioning locals this may work—but not in company mill towns where all mail is the first pick of the bosses and, more important, when we were in the middle of a drive, recruiting new members by the hundreds, who prized the dues book more than anything and a drive among new recruits to union organization of any kind. Why the force before us allowed this method to continue and hamper their work I do not understand. We found over 500 dues books piled up at our Charlotte office and hundreds of disgusted workers because they waited so long for a book and did not get any. In normal times the delay would be too much for such drives. We soon put an end to this method. The Bessemer City Conference rolled around and showed:

1. We had the textile workers of the whole area behind us with a couple of hundred delegates, mainly from the Gastonia area and over 1,500 workers attending.

2. The delegation, all American born workers accepted our program unanimously through policy and not mechanical control.

(k) The Southern fraction failed to obtain any Negro delegates to the convention, even after some were elected.

The parade in Gastonia that the center informed us to call off for fear of a riot was agreed to by us, but I had been the last one to accept it and as far as my knowledge goes the prisoners were the first to protest the idea of the parade.

Following the Bessemer City successful conference came a change of venue to Charlotte for August 26th. The Bessemer conference had instructed all members to be present in court Monday morning and the hot day found our forces well represented in Gastonia that whole day and a packed courtroom mostly of textile workers in their working clothes.

The unions and other organizations cooperating intensified our work in the coming weeks and the union picnic of August 25th at Mt. Holly was jointly with the preliminary I.L.D. conference a day before the second trial. We progressed in the following activity. Plans were well under way for the Charlotte October 12-13 convention of the newly organized district as the outgrowth of the Bessemer conference. Our literature covered the whole field and the South. The *Labor Defender* and the *Daily Worker* played an invaluable role. The youth organizers from the North were pressed into union work to such a degree that their own field was neglected. They made excellent fighters. Mass union meetings and local union meetings, closed and open were held in all mill towns, we had three to four in progress each night. The number of mill locals increased with our work.

(l) By this time the slogan of frame-up was changed to self-defense and I supported Dunne on this. In the field, covering meetings every day, meetings of determined workers who were only able to hold these meetings each time we first organized a force strong enough to let the boss know he had better not attack us; and with defense committees organized around each meeting I was carried away with the con-

crete situation as others of the Southern fraction were.

The right of self-defense was a living reality with us and without it our organizers were the dead force. However, the situation in the field and the slogan as a national one to rally broad masses of all shades of political beliefs in the workers' camp for the one big issue was against this frame up and the self-defense issue should have nationally been a secondary issue regardless of what the reality of our concrete meetings were. This is not an excuse for me—just facts—but does not justify the position. More harmful than this was the I.L.D. "united front" campaign we will deal with later.

The Mt. Holly picnic was a huge success and the second trial ended with a mistrial. A retrospection will show we followed up the attacks of the bosses' first degree charge with not one victory but a series of victories and consolidated our forces in this area and extended agitationally in many other centers of the South.

(10) By the end of August the leading field fraction committee could feel increased action and plans against us, a preparation of the bosses for a drive on us. Our feeling was based on daily observation and reports from the field. The full fraction was put on a military base to the dislike and protest of several of the fraction members who joked about it. We prepared according to conditions and on September 9th, Saturday afternoon a mob of several hundred, overseers, bosses and part of the committee of 100 included with the "law's" protection, with rifles, clubs and blackjacks assembled at a meeting place in South Gastonia, chased all comers away and attacked a speaker's car and beat up the occupants. It was the beginning of the open drive on us. The speakers were lucky to get out with such little damage.

This brought home a warning and the reality of the situation to the rest of the comrades. We prepared to answer this with a mass meeting there, our regular Saturday one the next week and with a week's mobilization for it. Monday the mistrial brought the second trial to an end and that night the black hundreds rode led by Bulwinkle and Solicitor Carpenter, swept three counties, raided three offices, looked everywhere for all organizers they could lay hand on, destroyed records they could find and kidnapped Wells, Saylor and Lell and were not fortunate in obtaining the others or our main records due mainly to

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conditions in China cried out for independent Communist leadership, for the arming of the workers and peasants, for the unleashing the forces of revolt in the cities and the country-side against both the Chinese and the foreign bourgeoisie. In the name of the "democratic dictatorship" which "could not be skipped" and the bloc of all classes, the Stalin-Bucharin regime worked hand in hand with the Chiang Kai-Sheks and Wang Chin Weis to stifle the mass movement. To the extent that the Stalin regime is responsible for the leadership of the present "Communist armies" ("Communist" today and with Feng or Chiang tomorrow) it is guilty of hindering the real mobilization of the masses for the class struggle.

The Correctness of the Opposition

There is deep discontent and acute suffering in the country. How great the revolutionary tidal wave was when the Russian Opposition wrote its platform, and how correct was its prognosis is evidenced by the fact that three years after the crushing of the Canton insurrection and the industrial proletariat, the movement of 1925-6-7 still finds a belated echo on the country-side. But the peasantry is no independent social force. Its liberation from landlordism and feudal elements, the nationalization of the land and its redistribution can be achieved as the Russian revolution demonstrated, neither in alliance with the bourgeoisie nor by its own independent action, but in alliance with and under the leadership of the industrial proletariat. The democratic revolution, the essence of which is the agrarian revolution, can, in other words, be realized only by the socialist dictatorship, which nationalizes the basic in-

our early preparations and possibly to luck.

Our mass meetings were stopped except in Charlotte where the first one held after the raids shows the workers 100 per cent behind us and a good defense corps ready for anything. While the black hundreds had free reign for the following period we were daily going to mill locals in the area and setting up an underground apparatus. The fact that we had over two dozen mill locals, functioning well for such workers new at organization saved the day and laid the basis for our comeback and also prevented the black hundreds from driving us out of the whole area. The secret mill local meetings were the reasons for the mob follow up in small bands. They aimed to stop them, to get the speakers and organizers, break up the work for October 12-13 and defeat our work for the next trial. They succeeded in taking Cleo Tessener, our King Mt. organizer out on the night of September 18.

Fair progress under these difficult conditions was being made for the Saturday counter-attack of our forces. Each night textile workers from locals in the area took turns and sacrificed the night as guards near the jail in Charlotte where our comrades were prisoners to prevent another attempt to lynch them. The action of the police in the immediate preceding period proved not to us, who were already convinced) but to the textile workers, that they could not be depended upon and this law was the bosses' law and not our law.

Our progress for Saturday received a big setback on September 12 when the Charlotte police raided our organizers' house one block from the jail, took our weapons and ammunition of defense, arrested comrade Saul, Martin and five others and charged them with "attempt to overthrow the government of N.C." This charge did not get to first base but it had its desired effect of disorganizing our force and taking our defense weapons while the black hundreds were arming everyday for Saturday.

From the governor to the policeman the "law and order" program was a policy of hands off the bosses' black hundreds and search and seizure of the textile workers old rusty hunting guns. The policy was in well oiled shape Saturday when the bands of the bosses black hundreds of overseers, foremen, hired gunmen and reactionary organization forces rode every road in and around Gastonia in high powered cars with guns held high. In every mill town they dispersed the textile workers headed for So. Gastonia when possible. This culminated in the murder of Ella May, a murder committed by the mill owners, their police, the Governor's force and their thugs to carry out the work. The other organizers who took part in the Saturday attempt to get to So. Gastonia ended with their narrow escape.

industries and establishes worker's control. The agrarian revolution by itself cannot solve the problems of the Chinese revolution. It can only be one phase of the struggle against world imperialism. The national unification of China and its customs independence—that it the monopoly of foreign trade, will be ushered in under the dynamic action of the proletariat.

There is no "short cut" to the revolution. The "easy" ways of opportunism and putschism prove in the end the longest ways. The need of the hour in China is to rally the masses against the counter-revolutionary ruling bourgeois cliques. The Communist Party must root itself again in the industrial proletariat, cement its alliance with the poor peasantry, and organize the great masses around a program of partial demands with the Constituent Assembly as the focal point. And the struggle against foreign imperialist intervention, a hindrance to any revolutionary progress, must be taken up in earnest.

—MAURICE SPECTOR.

KLORKEIT No. 4

Note that the fourth number of Klorkeit, organ of the Jewish Left Opposition group in France, has arrived. It contains among other articles the fourth installment of comrade Trotsky's "The Third Period of the Mistakes of the Comintern."

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THE MILITANT

25 Third Avenue New York, N. Y.

Strong-Arm Stalinism Defeated in N. Y.

The corner of 125th Street and 5th Ave., a working class section, has been occupied every Saturday night by speakers of the Communist League of America (Opposition), New York branch, for two summers. Every week, from two to four hundred workers have gathered regularly to hear our point of view on current questions. The neighborhood being well populated by Russian White emigres also, our speakers have constantly been confronted with their hecklers who attempt to influence the workers against Communism and the Russian workers' republic. Their attacks were always easily met by our comrades, although the White guards persist, and recently have begun to throw water-bags and tomatoes from the roofs and windows.

At the last few meetings, however, the White guard scum has found an unexpected ally in the attempt to break up our meetings. That ally consists of a couple of hooligans, parading under the name of the official Communist party, who try to break up the meetings by violence. On July 26th, when only four of our comrades were present at the meeting a gang of 30-40 Stalinist hoodlums commenced a concentrated fire of shouting, booing, heckling and disturbance while comrades Jane and Max Rose were speaking in defense of the Soviets which were being calumniated by the Whites. Towards the end of the meeting, they made a rush for the platform, one or two of them mounted it to shout a few of the stock "slogans against Trotskyism" they learned from Browder, and then disappeared into the night.

The following week, August 2, another group of Party members, accompanied by the same drunken individual who had led the assault the week before, appeared at the meeting while comrade Max Shachtman was speaking to some 400 workers. For over an hour, this young bully carried on a disgraceful shouting down of the speaker, who was explaining the reasons for the Fish Committee "investigation" of Communism. He was evidently trying to whip the Party members present into a frenzy, preparatory to rushing the platform again, but his conduct was so scandalous that when Shachtman asked the other Party members if they agreed with his actions, they answered publicly in the negative!

The White Guards assisted the Stalinist hooligan by continuing to throw water-bags and vegetables from concealed spots, until the workers in the audience, outraged by the arrogance of the disrupter, helped our comrades remove him from the scene.

Other Party members remained, and together with non-Party workers, asked numerous questions in a comradely manner. They realized that the conduct of the disrupter only discredited Communism and the C. P. in the eyes of the workers. The tactics of some Stalinists, inspired by their leaders, of roving the streets in search of workers' meetings to break up only ends, as it must, in alienating every honest worker from the Party.

The Opposition, of course, will continue to hold its meetings in public, to defend them against White Guard Russians' and even against Stalinists when that is necessary.

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A CORRECTION ON CHINA

The Militant is glad to correct a false impression it left in a previous issue concerning the groupings within the Chinese Communist movement. Our attention was called to it by comrade Niel-Sih who wrote us from Shanghai: "By the way, a mistake is made by you in saying that the Chinese Left Opposition published the organ *The Proletarian*. In fact, it is the Right Opposition group, led by Chen Du-Siu (former secretary of the C.P.) who publishes *The Proletarian*. The *Our Word* group which wrote to you that they would publish *The Proletarian* never realized its plan until this name was adopted by the Right Opposition group which is now masking itself in Left Opposition phrases. The three chief currents in the Opposition movement in China are the ultra-Left *Our Word*, the Left Opposition group, and the Right *Proletarian*."

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