

Carolina Demands Its Pound of Flesh

The hue and cry has been raised. The posses are out for their victims. The North Carolina supreme court has upheld the decision of the lower court in the case of the seven militants convicted for their activities in the recent Gastonia strike, and the authorities are demanding the surrender of the defendants out on bail. But the defendants are not surrendering and they are not to be found. It is even said that some are on their way to the Soviet Union or have already arrived there. And the chivalrous southern lynchers of Negroes and women are in an uncontrollable rage. Their victims are beyond their grasp. They have no intention of serving twenty of their best years in the murder holes that serve as Carolina's prisons.

The fury of the textile kings' legal footmen is boundless. Here they went to the expense of staging an elaborate frame-up in court, of producing their prejudiced witnesses, of paying god-fearing jurors, in order to send the active Gastonia Reds to prison for terms that mean life. And after the trial, and after the appeal, the cells prepared for the workers are just as empty as when it all began, and they promise to remain empty.

The hyenas have been cheated of their prey; the courts of their victims; the bloated textile manufacturers of their vengeance. And the people who murdered Ella May in cold blood are shouting about "honor", the people who raided and smashed tent colonies and relief stores, who kidnapped and tortured union organizers, who brutally assaulted picket lines, who organized hooded terror bands, are shouting about "the processes of law". The bullies who attack women and children, who lynch Negroes when they outnumber them a hundred to one, who are immune from reprisals by the mighty powers of the state and its courts and police forces, are shouting about "cowards who run away"!

The respectable and "impartial" capitalist press of the North has joined in the hue and cry for surrendering the seven. The New York *Telegram*, with its pseudo-liberalism that melts away at every touch of the class struggle, also presumes to speak of the missing defendants as "cowards". Its editors probably got the tip from the miserable article in the *Daily Worker* recently by Earl Browder, who accused comrade George Saul of cowardice for having "run away from a six-month chain gang sentence". This creature of Stalin, without convictions of his own or the courage of the convictions allotted to him by his employer, maintains a deep lence on the Gastonia defendants now, not having the courage to defend their refusal to walk into the life-long dungeons the Southern Bourbons have prepared for them.

For our part, the prison cells of Southern reaction may continue to be empty. The executioners of capitalist class justice have already taken more than enough toll in the wracked and tortured bodies of thousands of labor's best sons. Let the assassins of Haymarket, of Little and Hill, of Sacco and Vanzetti, cynical jailors of Mooney and Billings, the Centralia men, the Communists throughout the country—let these Shylocks demand their pound of flesh of the Gastonia militants. Their howls leave the class conscious working class cold . . . and firmer in its determination to release the class war prisoners who are still inside.

"MY LIFE"

All readers of the *Militant* and their friends, who desire to get their copy of Leon Trotsky, "My Life", should make it a point to order the book directly through the *Militant*. Shipment will be made the day the order is received, and the cost of the book, five dollars, (\$5.00), covers the postage charge. Send your order, together with money order or cash to

THE MILITANT
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'Third Period' Bluff

Bessemer City Strikes Again

On May 18, over 800 workers of the American Mills, No. 1 and 2 of Bessemer City, N.C., went out on strike against a 20 to 30 percent wage cut and the ruinous pace at which they are driven by the mill bosses. In flaring headlines, the *Daily Worker* immediately announced this defensive struggle as being "under the leadership of the National Textile Workers Union". The next issue of the *Worker* however, meekly and obscurely informed us that "there is a danger of a repetition of the form of betrayal made famous in the Flint automobile strike, with misleaders seeking to betray the strike by waging an attack on the T.U.U.L. organization which has outlined a policy of struggle and spreading the strike." On the third day, the *Daily Worker* declared even more humbly and more obscurely, that "it is not true, as previously stated that the N.T.W.U. is leading the strike."

Leadership of strikes and other struggles is not won overnight, nor do betrayals take place with such startling and mechanical suddenness. Betrayals come "like lightning" only as culminating points of actions and tactics over a period of time, prepared in advance in a manner obvious to the militant elements (at least they should be obvious), and this is precisely what the *Worker* tries to cover up. To make it clear would be to expose the results of the official Party's policy.

A Year Ago and Now

One year ago, we led the strike in Bessemer City at the same time that we led the Gastonia strike, and although the strike committee had misleaders and stool pigeons on it, our forces with correct tactics, were able to isolate them and gain the leadership of the strike. The Bessemer City strike, it is true, had largely been foreshadowed by the Gastonia strike but it was our tactics that carried us forward, and the July 28 Bessemer City conference, with a couple of hundred delegates and over 1,500 workers present demonstrated our progress. We had a union hall in Bessemer, held regular meetings, had two mill locals and two other groups in the first stages of mill locals. Bessemer City supported us through the overwhelming majority of the textile workers and the police were friendly just to the degree that they were former textile workers themselves and felt our strength and the solidity of the workers. (Bessemer City, by the way, was the home town of the martyred Ella May.)

From a condition of hegemony and undisputed leadership and with the possibilities greater and favorable objective factors, only one year passes for us to reach a point where our leadership is not only rejected, but organizers sent into the town are beaten up and almost lynched by hostile elements, who, consciously or not, play the game of the bosses and the Black Hundreds. Last year, when the Black Hundreds rode Gaston County we were able to hold our own in Bessemer City (which is six miles from Gastonia); today the tables are turned.

Not all of the bombastic phrase-mongering, and the self-praise so disgraceful in a revolutionist, not all the cheap journalistic talk about "Our Party being the only revolutionary leader of the mass struggles of the American workers", can successfully conceal the lamentable failure of the Party bureaucrats and their policies. The Bessemer City strike, like the Flint, Michigan and Pittston strikes before it reveal the fact that the Party leadership, substituting phrases and ever-changing theses for solid, every day preparatory work, is usually caught entirely unawares by struggles in precisely those

localities and industries where it should have been decisively in the forefront and leadership.

Instead of this difficult work of persistent (and sometimes slow) foundation laying, the Party leaders follow the policy of making the membership drunk with intoxicating phrases about the "masses following our leadership by the million", about "the crisis in American capitalism is finally breaking it down", and similar blubber.

Result of Phrase Mongering

The result is that when a struggle does break out, the Party and the Left wing are frequently on the outside, estranged from the workers. This was true in the anthracite movement; and to cover up its own bankruptcy, the leadership followed its usual course of monstrous bluff to the effect that the "N. M. U. was leading thousands of miners in a strike against unemployment". The same thing held true in Flint. No preparations of a substantial, solid nature. The strike broke out. The customary concealment of impotence by loud shouting and bluff to the effect that the "Auto Workers Industrial Union is leading the Flint strikers"—until the ease with which the bosses' agent, Comstock, sold out the workers put an end to the pitiful fairy tales of the *Daily Worker*. And now the Bessemer City strike in the heart of the Party's former strength in the South, without the slightest Communist or Left wing influence on it. Here the attempt to bluff about "N.T.W.U. leadership" collapsed in two days, and the shamefaced denial had to be recorded quietly in the Party press.

The Party is entirely correct in pointing out that a leadership which rejects class struggle unionism and direction, and Communist participation will run the strike to ground. The Party is similarly correct in fighting against the element in control of the strike and attempting to win the strikers to the National Textile Workers Union. But the Party methods are wrong and it is these that have given birth to the very forces they are fighting. To miss opportunities and fight with false exaggerated policies, is to play into the hands of the reactionary element who can then demagogically influence the workers against a proletarian outlook and method of struggle.

It must be repeated that Bessemer City is in the very heart of the Party's most sensational struggle, of its fortress in the South. That it is now entirely out of the N.T.W.U.'s hand is an alarm signal for the Communist workers. The "third period" and its philosophy have already witnessed several strikes in this country: Illinois, Flint, Imperial Valley, Pittston, and now Bessemer City. They were indications of the better objective situation for the movement, and the incapacity of the Party leadership. The dumping of the "third period" and its philosophers is the preliminary condition to the progress of the revolutionary movement. Bessemer City shows us why. —HUGO OEHLER

News from Southern California

LOS ANGELES—

Trials! Every week another one! With the exception of March 6, the demonstrations of February 26, March 20 (Paris Commune), May 1 and August 1, were only attempts at demonstrations but in this reactionary town of L.A. comrades are being arrested for "attempting" as well as for holding a meeting.

At the head of the Red Squad is none other than Wm .F. Hynes, who boasts of having belonged to the Workers Party for nine months. At its organization, who boasts of leading a strike in San Pedro—this working class traitor and boiler of little children (for he actually punished children that way) arrests 23 at one meeting, 16 at another, 10 at a third, puts them behind bars, beats them, and then sentences them to long months of imprisonment. There is not a Communist in Los Angeles Party member or not, Y.C.L. member or Pioneer, who hasn't got a jail sentence waiting for him.

Of all the demonstrations, March 6 was the exception, due to the newspaper publicity that the "Communists are going to capture the City Hall". The streets were packed with great crowds who came to see the big show. Where were the masses on May 1 and August 1? They were not to be seen in spite of the fact that 100,000 leaflets were mimeographed and distributed for May 1 and 35,000 for August 1. The "Red" Plaza was empty on both occasions. The Communists were not allowed to enter the Plaza on May 1, and so a few hundred comrades who gathered "demonstrated" on the sidewalks near the Plaza, led by the Pioneers. On August 1, the 50 comrades present witnessed the following demonstration: the Y.C.L. members and Pioneers hired a truck with high sides, hid within it, and entered the Plaza in the truck from which the singing of the "International" aroused the police and 28 were arrested. Of course the papers played it up. "Reds Riot on the Plaza" is their favorite headline.

For the first time in L.A. the jury disagreed in the last two trials. Frank Spector and Carl Sklar, sentenced to 42 years in Folsom and San Quentin were brought handcuffed from the California Bastilles to these trials. Of course, dates for the new trials have already been set. California justice cannot afford to let its victims loose. One woman juror was reprimanded by the judge for reading the *Daily Worker* while on the jury. She replied that the other jurors read the labor-hating *Los Angeles Times*.

* * *

Organizers in the Party in L.A. change like hot cakes on a Childs' frying pan. Bureaucrat Begler is gone, charged with "criminal neglect of duty". Mobil suddenly disappeared. Clark is in jail. So a 20-year old girl, hardly capable of holding a position, was appointed for the job.

* * *

The Friends of the Soviet Union held an enthusiastic meeting with Dan Donovan of the American Labor delegation to the Soviet Union. The hall was crowded with a thousand people who listened attentively and applauded heartily, for the story of the Soviet Union is the only one that can fill a hall for the C.P. in Los Angeles. Of course, Donovan did not mention the persecutions undergone by Oppositionists. No questions were asked due to the lateness of the hour, and the pictures shown did not show the prisons and places of exile where Rakovsky and his comrades are suffering under the Stalinist regime.

—B.B.

Φ

To defeat the great, centralized bourgeoisie is a thousand times easier than to "defeat" millions and millions of small owners (bosses) who in their daily, imperceptible intangible but demoralizing activities achieve the very results desired by the bourgeoisie, which restore the bourgeoisie. Whoever in the least weakens the iron discipline of the party of the proletariat (especially during its dictatorship), aid in fact the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

—LENIN

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