

The Communists in the South

By HUGO OEHLER

(11) With the black hundreds in the saddle and our activity shifted to holding and reorganizing our forces for a comeback we started our new work. Secret work in the Gastonia area through mill locals and increased open work all over the South to hem in Gastonia and to narrow the circle and close in. All that was needed in the outer area was organization, for the sentiment for us was there in masses and our organizers and colonizers from the outer area all sent letters telling us they are behind us and to keep up the good work. Many new contacts were gained and work toward October 13 went ahead.

The newspapers predicted that our convention would now be a failure and the bosses openly declared that it would not be held. We decided it had to be held even if we had to move out of this area but a survey of our forces convinced us we could hold it in Charlotte as originally planned. The third trial was on and while the legal end was taking care of the trial the organizers were as busy as hell with the union work in the two Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee and Georgia. Campaign after campaign was launched against us, one on the heel of the other so fast that it seemed like one continuation: red scare, Negro issue, revolution, etc., but this did not stop the work from progressing toward October 13.

(m) Now to consider a few of the other issues for a while. As far as the national I.L.D. campaign by this time was concerned it was a flop. We had a direct issue, more important to the American workers than the Sacco-Vanzetti issue (as far as they were concerned). Such favorable situations no organization had faced for years and naturally half an effort would show some results but on the whole we saw failure. Why? This failure can be traced to the "third period" tactics and the "third period" tactics can be traced to Stalin revisionism of Marxism, of the most fundamental international issues and the elimination of the Opposition.

In correcting the Party policy of the Right wing Lovestone leadership of "marrying" all possible fakers in the A.F.L. and other working class organizations we "corrected" this by dumping overboard with the fakers all progressives and Left wingers and Leninist united front tactics and replaced them with "pure" united front tactics with ourselves. Paper conferences were held everywhere.

(n) And the masses of other blunders and mistakes, a volume in itself, of all types of mistakes from important ones to little ones that amounted to setbacks were made by the incompetent leaders, Engdahl, Poyntz and Jakira. The field fraction pounded away at these errors, constantly, night and day, in every manner and form and found the leading committee at the center wanting because they were a hindrance instead of a help. I realize this now: That a Marxian Central Committee can correct this but a Central Committee made by a mechanical shift at the top replacing one variety of bureaucrats with another variety can only lead to further negative results.

In words the center accepted our program but in deeds—what follows shows the contradiction between the two. At this point serious minded comrades at the center (who were not decisive in determining actions instead of words from the center) laughed at my enthusiasm and told me that now since the spectacular, emotional part was over the bureaucrats would forget the south in deeds if not in words, and I would receive less support from now on than I had. This was my first trip to N.Y. with several more to follow on the same argument and I did not fully realize the truth of this statement until my last trip in December.

Yes, the spectacular end was over and the W.I.R. (Landy's incompetence) "pulling stakes" with the Leaksville strike on was followed by other departments in deeds (but not in words) and a decline set in after the end of the trial. The objective factor was more favorable but our force was not taking advantage of this situation. Reports from our field organizers and especially comrade Amy Schechter proved the favorable situation our work had given us this far.

The October optimism of our many southern organizers and mill local officials

with months of this inactivity was transformed into pessimism and our fraction of northern comrades was in a similar condition. The postponed national textile convention held in December in Paterson did not solve one of the basic problems of the south. In the meantime the A.F.L. was increasing its work and with the liberals and a section of the bosses was being used as a dam against our advance.

Another blunder following from the "Third Period" is the lumping of all outside the official Communist Party as Fascist or Social Fascist while life was proving the class struggle is not so mechanical and simple.

In the Atlanta case the *Daily Worker* had a scare headline telling how the A.F.L. official on the jury helped indict our comrades calling for the death penalty. But facts prove that Steve Nance, President of the Atlanta Federation of Trades, member of the Grand Jury that brought in the indictment was the only one who voted against the indictment. Later the Trades Assembly passed a resolution with only Secretary Marquardt of the State Federation and one other voting against the resolution calling for free speech for the Communists. This "third period tactic and misstatement played into the hands of these A.F.L. fakers as similar tactics play into the hands of Muste, Thomas, Howat, etc. Our plan is to defeat these labor lieutenants and not to strengthen them.

The "Party Task in the South" resolution to the 7th Convention of the C.P. says, "Our perspective must be for the defeat of the A.F.L. and its Muste wing in the mass industries of the south." We must by all means defeat these fakers in the ranks of labor but to say this in harsh terms, that may denote our feelings, and to accomplish the task are two different things. The present tactics of the official party is strengthening the position of these fakers instead of weakening their control over the masses.

Not even a half-baked revolutionist will argue that the struggle is simply one of the capitalist against the workers. The problem in the concrete is more complicated in the divisions and the many antagonisms within the classes and between the classes. Success or failure in advancing our position in winning a strike or revolution depends upon how many of the antagonisms and divisions in the workers ranks can be eliminated for united action against the enemy in a favorable objec-

The Y. C. I. Letter Brought to Light!

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away the base from the social reformists.... It is precisely in the period of radicalization that social reformism has all the opportunities of growth among the working class. The period likewise makes for greater opportunities for Communism..." (The Militant, March 8, 1930.) Now the Y.C.I. letter in its criticism of the N.E.C. estimation says: "It is obvious that the economic crisis narrows the basis for the influence of Social Reformism, you have also made a reservation as to the role of the League. But even these reservations cannot erase the fact that such a formulation shows an absolute underestimation of the influence of reformism and its possibilities for growth in such a country as America." Here is indeed confusion. One blind man cannot lead another. The Y.C.I. letter recognizes that there can be growth of reformism. But it is incapable of showing what is the basis for it. If the economic crisis narrows the basis for the influence of social reformism in the United States, then why speak of possibilities of its growth. The Stalinist bureaucrats of the E.C.Y.C.I. involve themselves in a maze of contradictions, and muddle the minds of the young Communists.

No Solution of the Problem

What does the letter propose as a remedy for the declining condition of the Y.C.L? Does it explain the cause for the situation? It can only exhaust itself in futile denunciations. It recommends a so-called "Plan

of Action", which is thoroughly ultra-Left and adventurist. The main points of these recommendations have been incorporated by the N.E.C. in its "Shock Plan", which we have already criticized in the last issue of the Young Vanguard. It can speak of shock troops, fronts and "storming" and all the other terms in the dictionary of military warfare. It even recommends red lists for those who do good work and black for those who don't. We suggest that the N.E.C. institutes a system of dunce caps and high stools, and spank all the naughty culprits whose names appear twice in the black list. These childish schemes do not at all relieve the acute crisis the Y.C.L. is in.

From a political viewpoint, although its only merit lies in calling attention to a critical situation, the Y.C.I. letter is a puerile document. It explains nothing and it solves nothing. It may result in the changing or removal of individuals, in demotions and promotions. But that is to no avail. It will hasten the process of fundamental re-evaluation in the minds of the Y.C.L. members, which will constitute an important step in the direction of the Left Opposition. —GEORGE RAY

After all this and after the Marion massacre the Musteites still retained leadership and gained influence throughout the country. The southern fraction tried four times to break into Marion, but I realize now that each time our advance and attempt at united action against these fakers was shackled and we failed to gain our objective because this shackling from the top by "Third Period" tactics predetermined our united action from below. We were criticized four times by the center for these failures that can be traced back to them. Why not ask ourselves this: How can such brazen betrayals be rewarded by greater influence of the Muste wing while our class struggle of Gastonia, which even our enemies admit was led by forces that cannot be bought out or run out (as is the case with the A.F.L.) have not been able to organize our influence from this struggle which was on a much higher class plane?

You cannot answer this on the basis of capitalist reaction and the necessary "smallness" of the revolutionary forces until we are at a higher stage of the class struggle or in power, because the question is not the organization of the majority of workers under reactionary leadership or revolutionary leadership but the organization of a goodly section of the forces either reactionary or revolutionary in the struggles and strikes. We must also not forget we are in the "Third Period" with "revolutionary upsurge". Facts prove that with proper tactics the revolutionary movement can consolidate its influence organizationally, as it has done in the past. In other words, our tactics have not only weakened our own forces but at our expense have rendered aid to these very enemies we talk so much about. We do not expect to build POWERFUL REVOLUTIONARY INDUSTRIAL unions in a few weeks' work, overshadowing the few million membership of the A.F.L. but we can expect to build a substantial influence and organization in the labor movement under our leadership with correct tactics.

Blackmailers Cloaked in Red Mantles

CLEVELAND—

The Czechoslovakian Stalinists of *Rovnost Ludu* continue to make bitter attacks upon me because I exposed them in the press. They call me "ex-detective", and according to them, I was supposed to have clubbed workers' heads in Youngstown during the steel strike. This is one of the most criminal calumnies. Having no ground to stand on, they invent the vilest and most vulgar stories. As a matter of fact, I was shot by a scab since I was the one that grabbed him and prevented him from sneaking in through the gate. I was also on the strikers' committee, representing a crew of 25. I know the methods of the Stalinists pretty well, yet I am astonished at such cheap and disgraceful methods against an Oppositionist in the ranks of Communism.

The pen-slaves of *Rovnost Ludu*, an official Party paper, are the kind of "Communists" who accept money from Czechoslovak multi-millionaires like Bata, the world's richest shoe manufacturer who exploits his slaves in the most inhuman manner. In *Rovnost Ludu*, you can find big advertisements from railroad companies, or Camel cigarettes, not to mention various ads from bankers. This paper has degraded itself to such a degree that even Mr. Browder and his cohorts have protested against these advertisements. But then, who is really to blame for these anti-Communist ways of the *Rovnost Ludu* management if not the Party's chiefs?

While Lovestone reigned in the Party I warned him in letters that if he and the rest of the committee would continue to neglect their duty to discipline the editors and managers of this paper, one of the Party's organs would soon disappear or would end in a pit of mire. Ever since then, things have gone from bad to worse so that in Foster-Browders "Third Period", workers are obliged to read the announcement in that paper that asks them to attend the funeral of a fat business man in the Holy Trinity Church.

It would be well to mention that the proceeds from such ads are privately pocketed by a most unscrupulous individual named John Zuskar, who is supposed to act as secretary of the non-existent Czechoslovak Communist fraction. Under his influence, Communist morale and influence has dropped among the Czech workers.

Before I was expelled from the Party this scoundrel never dared make insinuations against me for fear of having to answer before the Party. Now that Stalin has opened his murderous drive against the Left Opposition, the ardent Zuskar never misses an opportunity to duplicate his master's methods. (By the way, it was due to him that the Party's criticism of *Rovnost Ludu* failed to appear there, until it was finally published in such a thoroughly distorted form that the Fosterites would be satisfied!)

Since this individual has continually impugned my revolutionary integrity and record, without replying to my demands for proof, I now openly challenge him and the Party to establish a public workers' court, composed of an equal number of representatives of the Party and the Communist League (Opposition) who will jointly choose one or more non-partisan members. Failure to concur in this proposal will brand Zuskar and those who maintain him in office as unscrupulous liars and blackmailers. We await a reply.

—JOSEPH KELLER

just out!

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