

DISCUSSION ARTICLES

The Party and the Opposition's Tasks

(Continued from last issue) The Communist party came on the scene in 1918-19 following on the heels of the October revolution. The basic elements the party recruited from were foreign workers, members of the numerous Federations that had been connected for years with the American Socialist Party. The first few years of the party's existence were to a large extent taken up with preparatory work. On the one hand a systematic attempt to raise the ideological level of the general membership which had come out of the ranks of official socialism, absolutely innocent of any theory, and on the other, the need of lifting the party into open political work. The whole character of the party for the first four years of its existence was seriously colored by a semi-conspiratorial nature which was the outgrowth of the post war governmental persecutions.

suits of this wild adventurism is that from a following of 50,000, the industrial today commands a membership which is variously estimated from 3500 to 1500. To finish this devastating picture of decline a new policy is being evolved. To go back into the "company unions" for the purpose of "there raising the slogan of "destroying the company unions", only to renew tomorrow the "united front" from above. This field was probably the most fruitful in the whole party's existence. The general attitude of the needle trades workers who despite the party's claims have not become "reactionary", who have not forgotten the lessons of the struggles taught them by the Left wing is a universal distrust of the party leadership on any question concerning their status in the every day struggle.

2. The next outstanding event was the Passaic strike where despite the slowness of the party leadership to accept the gage of battle some 25,000 to 30,000 workers carried on a struggle for a half a year. This strike partook of all the sharpness so characteristic of American labor battles. After this protracted struggle the collective party wisdom could find no better road than to hand these workers over bag and baggage to the A. F. of L. fakers, to dissipate and demoralize. The party's influence in Passaic, New Bedford (where a strike took place two years ago involving almost as many workers as Passaic), is reported by Manuilsky at the recent R. I. L. U. conference as having reached a practical loss of all influence.

3. There had been a miners' strike embracing some 3 to 400,000 workers spread over the principal mining centers of the country. For two years while this struggle was waxing sharper and sharper, the party's press and spokesman, hardly mentioned the fact of its existence. This policy of evasion was finally brought to a head by the strike of miners in Colorado carried on under the auspices of the I. W. W. Out of this strike grew a nation wide agitation for relief and defense. The party pounced upon this movement as a godsend through which they could somehow enter into the neglected mine fields. They immediately started a general relief movement which for intensity and thoroughness in a considerable fashion covered up its previous neglect. One thing we must remember in connection with the miner's struggle. From its inception it took on the character of a struggle, not only against the mine operators but also against the lieutenants, the United Mine Workers bureaucracy. Instead of raising the badly needed slogan of a "clean sweep with all the fakers," the purging of the union of all undesirable elements and a real fight against the bosses, here insult was heaped upon injury by an unprincipled alliance with every rag-tag reactionary who momentarily spotted Left phrases. Out of this grew the famous movement of unpleasant memories, the "Save the Miners Union Movement." After this adventure the party organized a brand new union "the National Miners Union," this organization trimmed with all the revolutionary "phrases" and despite this contained some of the best known militants amongst the miners. Within a year's time, thanks to the mechanical manipulation of the party bureaucrats, with their system of elimination to the end of mechanical control we arrive at another new union called the "Mine, Mill, Oil and Smelter Workers Industrial Union" which Manuilsky quotes as having a membership of 50 (probably all functionaries). This appellation was quickly dropped and its previous name revived. The total results of these adventures are that whereas in 1926-27, and in some cases '28, the party and the Young Communist League had healthy working class branches in every mining town in Southern Illinois, western Ohio, Pennsylvania, etc. there is hardly a party nucleus left. The bitterly contested movement now taking place in Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia bids fair to once more revive the possibilities of Communist penetration providing of course that the Centrist leadership does not pursue the usual course.

4. By far the most favorable field of work for a number of years has been the marine industry. In 1921 the I. S. U. alone boasted 125,000 members or roughly 85 percent of all deep sea workers. The same proportion of organization prevailed in a lesser degree amongst the harbor workers in practically every

large port on both coasts. After the '21 strike this tremendous strength was dissipated. Two years later the Marine Transport Workers of the I. W. W. could truthfully claim a membership of from 25 to 30,000. Some brilliant strikes were carried on, of which San Pedro, Calif., bids well to go down into the annals of working class history as a most heroic and bitterly contested struggle. This union also went to smash, this time as a result of the characteristic muddleheadedness of syndicalist leadership. In 1923, the party organized the Marine Workers International Club on South Street New York harbor. The purpose of this club was to coordinate Left wing sentiments with the object of launching a much needed union (Andrew Furseth once said that "if the Salvation Army was so minded, it could organize the Marine Workers into a fighting union.") This club was no sooner organized than it began to draw around its fold all the leading militants in the industry. These were men who through 10 or 15 years of the war and post-war period had gone through a history of organized struggle. They were well trained militants. At

this point the struggle between Foster and Lovestone sharpened as a result of which the opportune time for launching a union was deferred for years. A convention was held a year and half ago which in composition contained the finest representation seen in many a year at a Marine convention. A union was launched, the Marine Workers Industrial Union. Mink, Sparks and such kindred ilk who had no knowledge of the industry were picked as the chosen leaders. Most of the militants who entered into the union were Communist Communists, yet they were willing to undertake the task of organizing under the controlling leadership of the R. I. L. U. This was not to be. Elements who would not put up with all the impositions of the bureaucracy were not desirable. The Marine Workers Industrial Union after a bare year's existence cannot even be classified as a skeleton. The best elements have been driven out or mechanically eliminated. Here too, the party's influence is practically non-existent, where it is not totally discredited.

(To Be Continued) —S. M. ROSE.

Education and the Young Communists

In the program of the Young Communist International adopted at its Fifth Congress its character as an educational organization is affirmed. Despite this correct programmatic statement, the Young Communist Leagues do not fulfill this function. For them to do so would mean to come into conflict with the ruling regime in the Comintern.

The members of the Y. C. L. do not understand the educational nature of their organization. For them its whole purpose is expressed in the simple formula: to win the youth for the struggle against capitalism. The vanguard role of the party and how the Y. C. L. contributes to the creation of this vanguard is not understood by them, although they may know formally that the party is supposed to be the vanguard of the class. The formula has no real content for them. The importance of the Marxian vanguard for the success of the revolution has been demonstrated by the victory of the Russian revolution and the defeats of the German and Chinese revolutions. The Young Communist League can help force the Marxian vanguard only if it functions correctly as an educational organization. But does it? Let us restate the problem here:

1. In capitalist society the young worker is intensely exploited. Not only are the needs for his particular physical and mental development which he undergoes during this period completely disregarded, but he is even more burdened than the adult worker. He is compelled to work under worse conditions and receives less wages than the adult worker for the same amount of work. He thus occupies a special position in industry.

2. The Young Communist League is the organization of the working class youth which defends its special interests; unites them with the struggles of the whole working class for the improvement of its conditions; and indissolubly merges them with the historic mission of the proletariat for the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition stage to socialism.

3. However, the need for a separate political organization of the working class youth arises not from its special position in industry, but from the peculiar psychological characteristics of youth. If this were not so, there would be no reason why the party should not become directly the defender of the special interests of the youth adopting appropriate organizational forms such as youth committees or youth sections to concentrate on this work.

4. The psychological characteristics of youth, such as, the predominance of sentiment over reason, greater need for sociality and self-expression, impulsiveness, plus the inexperience and lack of theoretical knowledge determines the character of the Y. C. L. as an educational organization. The purpose of the Y. C. L. is to train Communists. The method for accomplishing this is participation in the class struggle supplemented by theoretical study.

5. Because of all this, as well as the fact that each generation arrives at Communism under changed objective conditions and in its own way, the Y. C. L. in its relation to the party is organizationally independent; and because of the superior experience and knowledge of the party which is the vanguard of the entire class—it is politically subordinate to it.

6. The Young Communist League is a broader form of organization than the party. It admits to its ranks all young workers who want to become Communists while the party admits to its ranks those who are Communists that is, those who accept its full program. The party consists of the most advanced elements of the class.

7. From this follows the different character of the inner life of the League from that of the party. The youth in order to learn must be allowed the right of questioning the validity of the formulas presented by the party. Only in this way will the members of the Y. C. L. be enabled to develop into genuine, disciplined Bolsheviks—Communists with conviction, courage, initiative, and character. Adequate guarantees that the Y. C. L. remains a Communist organization are: political subordination to the Party, correct party strategy tactics, a cadre of party members within the League occupying the leading positions (that is, older League members with more experience and superior knowledge, democratically elected), and democratic centralism.

8. In actuality all this is not so. Neither the party nor the Y. C. L. is or-

ganized in accordance with these fundamental ideas. The Rights and the Centrists have distorted the whole idea of the party. In the Soviet Union they are gradually dissolving the party in the class through wholesale admission of elements unqualified to be in the vanguard (whole factories joining en masse). In the capitalist countries an analogous process occurs through the indiscriminate admission of elements who do not possess the proper prerequisites for membership. Democratic centralism has been eliminated. The proletarian wing has been expelled. The apparatus has usurped the functions of the party. Bureaucratism reigns supreme.

9. In the Y. C. L. the members are not permitted to criticize the policies and lines of the apparatus which must be viewed as infallible. They can only state whether the "unquestionably correct" line has been correctly or incorrectly applied. If bureaucratism is disastrous for the party, it is even a hundred times more so for the Y. C. L. for it strikes at the very heart and idea which makes a separate organization of the youth necessary.

10. The future of the Communist youth movement depends on the struggle against the bureaucratic regime and all the revisionist policies upon which it rests. This can be done only through the road proposed by the Left Opposition. The cadres from the Communist youth movement will be educated for the future regenerated Communist party in the process of this struggle.

In view of this situation what tasks devolve upon the Left Opposition? The inability of the Young Communist League to fulfill its function because of Stalinist bureaucratic strangulation imposes an enormous responsibility on the shoulders of the Left Opposition. It must assume the duty of training the cadres from the youth for the Communist vanguard. It means that the Opposition must be alert to the youth question, and devote more attention to it than it has in the past. The advance of the Opposition will to a large extent be determined on its success in educating youth elements for future leadership.

But does this mean that because the Y. C. L. is prevented from performing its real task correctly, that the Opposition ought to ignore the Y. C. L. and perhaps attempt to create a new Y. C. L. which, because of correct Marxian leadership, will perform its functions? This would be an extremely erroneous conclusion. The relation of the Opposition to the Y. C. L. can at the present time be in no way different than towards the party. The arguments which determine our attitude toward the party are equally valid here. The Opposition will educate the youth elements in the process of its struggle against bureaucratism and opportunism.

The tasks of the Left Opposition in relation to the youth are:

- 1. Propaganda on the real nature and functions of the Young Communist League.
- 2. Elaboration of youth policies on the basis of facts.
- 3. United front of youth members of Opposition with Y. C. L. on every possible occasion.
- 4. Building of a strong fraction in Y. C. L.
- 5. Relentless criticism of Stalinist policies in Y. C. L.
- 6. Special attention to Marxian education of youth comrades in the opposition.
- 7. Participation of Opposition youth in all phases of class struggle to the greatest extent possible.

—GEORGE RAY.

Organization Notes

For the arrangements of our pre-conference discussion the National Committee has decided that it is necessary to arrange contributions in such a way that they do not exceed two columns per article, but with no restrictions upon the number of contributions which any member may wish to submit. We count in general not on more than one page per issue for discussion. This will also include the publication of the additional theses and resolutions.

For those who may at the outset look for an analysis and conclusions from the revolutionary developments in Spain, while that was not contained in the main draft thesis it will become part of our proposed resolution on developments within the International and in the Left Opposition.

In taking up this discussion in the various branches the best method will naturally be the one of first taking up the general estimates and the conclusions which the draft thesis presents. Once that is thoroughly understood it becomes easier to take up possible amendments on certain aspects, adding omissions or proposing changes of formulation if any. In the discussion in general, both within the branches and the written contributions, comrades should bear in mind that when proceeding somewhat systematically, possibilities are the best for an exhaustive clarification of views. Hence our fundamental political views should receive first consideration, that is, discuss first the draft theses. This will then facilitate taking up further the tasks which flow from these fundamental views as well as the tactical questions and organizational problems implied.

Our Recent Activities

The Boston branch has been temporarily reinforced by the arrival of comrade Sam Gordon from New York. He will function there in an organizing capacity, help the branch by speaking at meetings, helping to make contacts and in taking up more effectively the work within the general mass movement. The period of his stay is not definitely determined but depends upon the possibilities as well as the resources available. Comrades Clarke and Stamm have now for a few weeks been very active in Cleveland. Jointly they have been speaking at regular meetings on the Public Square to an ever-increasing and ever more sympathetic audience. They have reported many examples of the eagerness with which assembled workers have listened to explanation of the views of the Left Opposition and received our literature. Concretely it has been proven in an ever increasing literature distribution.

Comrade Stamm will henceforth carry on alone in Cleveland while Clarke is making a tour further west through the mine fields to St. Louis, Mo. There he will remain for a while and help organize the activities of our branch. It is the expectations that he will also be able later to spend a little time in Kansas City, Mo. This is not an organization tour in the usual sense of the word but rather one of a footloose active member putting in an effort to help build the Left Opposition in various places. The results so far have nevertheless been of distinct organizational value.

The Minneapolis branch has made a record of taking in several new members during the last couple of months. For a period some of its active forces spent some time in the Duluth-Superior territory and established contacts through which literature is now being distributed. These forces have returned to the twin cities and again strengthened the branch. The branch has participated in miners' relief work and the comrades report that as usual the relief conferences were very narrow and their efforts will be directed toward giving them a broader basis. In trade union activities our Minneapolis comrades are as busy as ever. Just now the main attention is taken up with organization to thwart the expulsion campaign initiated by the A. F. of L. union bureaucrats, this time not merely aimed at the Communists but also against the progressive workers.

Our Expansion Program

While big progress cannot be reported, this time there is nevertheless results showing that the interest is still alive. From the preceding notes it will be observed that we are making some progress in a modest way toward extending our general organization activities. That, of course, is part of our program and thus indicates further advance. If the pre-conference activities, the discussions and preparations for the gathering are correctly connected up with the material aspect of finances we will be sure to be well on our way with the third step. The fact that new names have appeared right along on the contribution list to the Expansion Program proves that efforts in this direction are continually being made.

Nevertheless we must say—more speed. The contributions received since last report were as follows:

2,000—

Boston br.	\$5.00
New York	
B. J. Field	25.00 1,500—
Toronto br.	4.00
Cleveland	
I. A. Brody	8.09
Minneapolis br.	11.56
Kansas City br.	20.00
Total	\$72.86
Previously reported	\$1103.41
Total	\$1176.27

1,000—

750—

500—

250—

FRAGMENTS OF TRUTH FROM UNDER THE GARBAGE OF SLANDER

In 1924, Zinoviev set into circulation an accusation against Trotsky for issuing the railroad "Order 1042", which was supposed to have nearly ruined transportation. Upon this canvas, Stalin, Yaroslavsky and Rudzutak embroidered their designs. The legend made its rounds in its day throughout the press of the Comintern. In a letter by Trotsky to the Institute for Party History, the actual contents of Lenin and Dzerzhinsky on Order 1042 and its significance for transportation, are reproduced. But it appears that there is a comment of more recent origin. In the Annual of the Comintern which appeared in 1923, that is, on the eve of the campaign against Trotsky, in an article "The Transport of the R. S. F. S. R. and Its Rehabilitation" the following is said literally:

"At this time, transportation was completely ruined. There was not only no talk about its rehabilitation, but matters went so far that in the Council of Labor and Defense, a member of the collegium of the People's Commissariat of Transportation, Professor Lomonosov, made a report to the effect that transportation is on the eve of complete and unavoidable standstill. Comrade Trotsky, having undertaken the direction of transportation, advanced two slogans which had a decisive significance not only for transportation but for the whole economy of the country. . . . Order 1042 is an historical one. According to it, the locomotives were to be rehabilitated within five years. The Communist propagation of this Order and the Communist rise which this produced should be recognized as the highest level attained by the increase of the masses' readiness for labor—for feats." (Annual of the Comintern, Publishing House of the Comintern Petrograd-Moscow, 1923, page 363.)

And so on and so forth. As we see, the function of "Order 1042" was different at different periods. —ALFA.

Books

by Leon Trotsky

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