

EDITORIAL NOTES

LEARN FROM THE WORKERS

The sound impulse of the militant workers to maintain solidarity with persecuted members of their class under all conditions has again been demonstrated by the latest actions of Local 2090 of the carpenters' union in regard to the marine workers' defense. At the same time it has been shown again how far upstart bureaucrats, holding office by appointment and freed from accountability to the ranks, can depart from the principles they claim to espouse, and even to monopolize.

Local 2090 contains quite a few progressive and militant unionists, including a number of sympathizers of the official Communist Party. The I. L. D. has had a strong support there and the carpenters have responded every time to its appeals for class war prisoners. They took the idea of non-partisan labor defense more seriously, apparently, than the officials of the I. L. D. who had talked to them so much about it. Consequently when an appeal was made to them for the marine workers they responded just as loyally as they had done in other cases. The principle had taken root in the union, and the few members, inspired by the Party and I. L. D. bureaucrats, who tried to sabotage the action succeeded only in damaging their own prestige.

It might be thought that this warning would have been sufficient to put a stop to such trifling, at least in this union. But the Stalinist generals and field marshals have hard heads, very little shame and absolutely no respect for the intelligence of the workers. They thought there must be some mistake, and they undertook to correct it. Hacker, the district organizer of the I. L. D., took an evening off from his arduous labors for the principle of non-partisan support of class war prisoners to go to the union and explain that it did not apply in this case. Having learned by the previous experience that the carpenters could not be turned against the prisoners, he switched the attack to their defense committee and proposed that the union should withdraw its support from that body.

The ruse did not work. Without showing any prejudice one way or the other, the carpenters decided to hear both sides before coming to their final decision. They invited the defense committee to send a speaker to the next meeting. After hearing him they voted to continue their support of the marine defense committee until the end, without slackening any of their help to the cases defended by the I. L. D.

In this action the workers gave two lessons to the bureaucrats. On the one hand they showed that what they are really concerned about is workingmen in jail and not the auspices of their defense. On the other hand, rejecting the sabotaging tricks of the Hackers, they maintained their solidarity with the prisoners defended by the I. L. D., in spite of the Hackers. In both cases we believe they were right. Their actions show a line of principle, and that is what is needed to find the right answers to questions of the class struggle.

The lesson will be lost on the bureaucrats of Stalinism because these people think only of instructing the workers, never of learning from them. But we have no doubt it will have its effect on the Communists in the carpenters' union who were made ridiculous before their organization by their attempts to carry out false instructions.

UNITED FRONT IN PRACTICE

We have heard a lot of twaddle about the united front from critics of the Left Opposition who have described our struggle for principle as "sectarianism". But for all that, the first concrete example of the united front which has not involved a sacrifice of principle—the marine workers' defense committee—was initiated by the "sectarians" of the Opposition. So far all of its activities have been of a positive character and we have no reason to regret our participation in it. What the future will bring we cannot know, but this much is already clear: the formation of the committee carried into life an almost forgotten principle, it rendered a timely service to persecuted workers and therefore to the class they represent. Thereby it is justified.

The event may have a certain effect on future developments in the Left wing labor movement. Hopes—as well as fears and speculations, depending on the source—are spoken of all around in this regard. But in our opinion the hopes as well as the fears are considerably exaggerated. We think now as we thought before that the problem of the united front, taking all the circumstances—and primarily the splits and relation of forces in the Communist ranks—into consideration, is a long way from solution. The work of the marine workers defense committee is at best only a contribution, by way of example, toward that solution.

Most empty and groundless of all is the talk about our participation in this joint struggle signifying a "change of policy" on the part of the Communist League. Those who draw this conclusion show that they know no more now than they knew before about the question of the united front. The defense committee is in no sense a political combination. It is not a union for joint struggle on a wide front of the class struggle. It is a simple agreement to cooperate on a single concrete issue, the most obvious one and the one having the widest appeal to the honest workers in all camps, and in a case which would brook no delay. You cannot stall around and negotiate very long when workers are facing trial;

you must either help to defend them or desert them. We chose the former course without any illusions as to the possible results and without altering our fundamental conceptions on the subject of the united front in general.

Another point needs to be considered in appraising this conditional, limited and—from our point of view—unavoidable united front action. That is its experimental character. Our part in the endeavor was conceived as a class duty at the moment. We never guaranteed the results of the effort. So far they are good, far better in fact than was to be expected. But we are willing to leave predictions as to the final outcome to others. We will draw our conclusions at the end of the experiment.

Nevertheless the experience up to date has all tended to confirm in practice the conceptions we held in advance regarding the difficulties of carrying through a united front action without the participation of the official Party. The logic of the situation works against its success, and it is only the exceptional circumstances and the limited character of the issue, which we naturally took into consideration beforehand, that prevented a disruption of the present action.

The rude provocations of the Stalinists could only have the effect of nourishing and strengthening the anti-Communist elements, which are present in this case as they will always be. The Stalinists, by their whole course, prepared the ground for the transformation of the defense committee into a concentration point against Communism. This did not happen, and it is not likely to happen. There were and remain certain safeguards against it. By the nature of the case and the origin of the movement the Communist are in a position to fight more effectively against such a distortion. The principle of unity—against the capitalists and not against the Communist Party—has been firmly established in the policy and work of the committee and will not be easy to change. And finally, this direction is strengthened by the attitude of the prisoners who have a decisive word and have spoken it clearly for this policy.

All of this goes to show that we are dealing here with an exceptional situation from which it would be most unwise to draw hasty and general conclusions for the future. We must rather concentrate on the problem of the moment. The treacherous maneuvers of the Stalinists have been branded as they deserved to be. The task now is to hold the defense movement to the work of principle upon which it has based up to now, which alone could maintain its class unity and justify its existence.

MORGENSTERN AND GOODMAN

The imprisonment of revolutionary workers is nothing new, even in America

where only the first skirmishes of the great class struggle have so far taken place, and Morgenstern and Goodman are only two more added to many. Yet the departure of these militants represents a unique development and has an exceptional significance. It fell to them to be the first to fall victims to direct class vengeance against the revolutionary wing of the Party. The case against them was purely political; the indictment was based exclusively on the contents of our unemployment leaflet. Hitherto this persecution has been refracted through the distorting lens of the controlling centrism, which is a form of alien class influence upon the movement. In the persons of Morgenstern and Goodman, American capitalism has struck directly at the Left Opposition. Thereby it has conferred a singular honor upon them and upon the cause they symbolize and represent.

Beyond all doubting there will be many more to follow in the stormy times that must intervene between the present period of preparation and beginning and the day of the final victory. Our doctrines which are destined to become the fighting ideas of millions will receive their verification in the heat of mighty conflicts in which no resource of violence and oppression will be neglected by the class enemy. In these fires the cadres of the revolutionary vanguard will be steeled and tested. There will be many victims. The example of Morgenstern and Goodman will have its value for those who are to follow. We can all be confident of this because those who carry our flag into the Pennsylvania jail are not strangers to us. We know them as fighters. These young and unassuming, and yet stalwart, revolutionists take with them our affection and our faith.

Despite their youth, Morgenstern and Goodman have already earned their standing in the Communist movement; there are six or seven years of activity behind them. They belong to the founders and organizers of the Left Opposition in America, and before that they fought on the side of the proletarian tendency in the party. In the ranks of the Opposition they have been distinguished by their qualities of stability and endurance, by their stubborn adherence to principle and their capacity to go against the stream. They combined a courageous open fight for our ideas against heavy odds with the modesty that befits the young revolutionist who doesn't know it all. In them there is not a trace of the ugly presumptuousness of those academic upstarts who conceive of revolutionary education as a set of scholastic exercises. The jail will not hurt Morgenstern and Goodman, it will only make them stronger.

As is known, the Stalinists, who dispose of the party press and the defense organization of the I. L. D. and abuse the good faith of the workers who support them, refused any assistance to our two Philadelphia comrades. They deserted them in the court of the class enemy and gave not a published word of notice to their conviction and sentence. We will not forget that. In the final accounting for their rudeness, their dis-

The Right Wing of Spanish Communism

The Spanish Communist movement is divided into three distinct groups: Right, Left and the Center representing the "official" wing of Communism. In these divisions, the Spanish movement is not at all unlike the movement in every other important country. Where it differs is in the relative strength of each of the three wings. In distinction from most other countries, the Left Opposition in Spain can easily stand comparison with the official party from more standpoints than one. In addition, the Right wing group in Spain—at least at the time I visited the country; I learn that the ratios have since changed considerably in favor of the party—is as large in one district as the official party is nationally, if not larger. And what is more, enjoys practically a monopoly on the Communist movement so far as Catalonia is concerned.

The Spanish Right is organized into the Catalan-Balearic Communist Federation and its electoral apparatus, the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc which, in all important respects, supercedes the Federation. The Federation was the representative of official Communism in Catalonia until a short time ago when the split took place between the Catalonians and the Madrid Executive Committee of the party over the insanely sectarian trade union policy which the latter sought to impose upon the party members against the will of a majority of them. The trade union dispute which was of such vital importance at the height of the revolutionary upsurge—involving as it did the whole future of the National Confederation of Labor which was being resurrected—was rendered increasingly acute by the extraordinary bureaucratic regime prevailing in the party. The attempt of an irresponsible and unrepresentative clique, terming itself the "Executive Committee" to foist itself upon the membership, willfully, met with obstinate resistance, particularly from the Catalonian Communists.

The result was that, as has happened everywhere else, the bull-headed arrogance and blundersomeness of Stalinism literally drove hundreds upon hundreds of the best Communist workers into the camp of the fusionists and opportunists. Skillful leader, popular figure in the party and among the workers, revolutionist of long standing and prestige, Joaquin Maurin, with his associates Arlandis, Arquer, Sese, Miravittles, and others, was able to win the leadership over the whole Communist organization of Catalonia "and the Balearic Islands". To such an extent that the official party today, while it grows with sometimes phenomenal speed in other parts of the land, has practically no strength whatsoever in Catalonia, where the Maurinists have some four to six thousand (the figure has increased since I left) in the Bloc.

The structural relations between the Federation and the Bloc are reminiscent to an American Communist of the fabulous plan of Pepper & Co. to build a mass party in the United States by the simple expedient of organizing the "Federated Farmer-Labor Party" on a "mass scale" and then suddenly converting it into the Communist Party. In Catalonia, too, the Federation controls the Bloc, and is led by precisely the same people dressed in different uniforms as occasion requires. But there is one feature of it which is worse than what the glittering Pepper conceived. While the still-born F. F. L. P. was at least formally conceived as a bloc composed of various organizations otherwise independent of each other, and admitting no individual membership, the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc is a "bloc" in no real sense of the word. The Communist Federation directs it; like the Federation, the Bloc is based upon individual and not group membership; in a word, it is an enlarged caricature of the Federation itself, and nothing more.

Yet there is something more. The Maurinist justification for the two organizations is that the Federation should be "pure" and take in only educated revolutionist, Communists; it must be somewhat "narrow". But "as Lenin taught", the Communist party, i. e., the Federation, must surround itself with broad mass organizations into which even non-Communist elements may be taken. Such an organization, the Bloc is supposed to be. It is much larger than the Federation; it takes into its ranks all sorts of elements, including "Catalan Left" supporters and people to the right of even this bourgeois group.

The whole point, however, is that the "Bloc" increasingly dominates the "Federation", instead of vice versa—that is, assuming for the moment that the whole idea is not a vulgar derision of Lenin's teachings. In the elections, it is not the Communist organization which is presented, but the candidates and platform of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc. In this case; substance marches side by side with form. The critical minority which Maurin finally expelled, sharply assailed the whole policy of the Right wing leaders in the elections. Wherever the Bloc was active—and most of its militants are also Federationists—the face of Communism was heavily veiled with the more attractive colors of opportunism. Instead of advancing and popularizing the revolutionary slogans, the Bloc organizers devoted their attention to playing upon the petty bourgeois prejudices of the nationalistic elements. It is no exaggeration to say that the largest proportion of the Bloc's growth has been among the petty bourgeois elements and among the employees and office workers, particularly in Barcelona, where the factory workers in the Right wing organization are very few. On the countryside, the members of the Bloc are mostly peasants, tenants and even small proprietors. These elements, flocking to the banner of the Bloc, do not remain passive there. They exert a growing petty bourgeois pressure to which the leaders yield with a grace learned from the art books of opportunism.

The source of strength of the Maurinists lies precisely there: in its petty bourgeois surrender to the backwardness of the workers and peasants of Catalonia. The party of Macia, the "Esquerra Catalan", the various other factions of the Catalonian bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, have all moved to the Right since the proclamation of the republic. This is particularly true of Macia, the former idol of the petty bourgeoisie. The marked shift to the Right of what was formerly the Left wing of the Catalonians, has created a vacuum in the field. Politics abhors a vacuum as much as nature does. It seeks to "fill the vacuum." In Catalonia, the space left vacant in politics by the Macians is being occupied by the Maurinist group, the increasingly popular candidate for the post of extreme Left wing of the Catalonians.

Not having an influence over the decisive sections of the industrial workers, particularly those organized in the C. N. T. (National Confederation of Labor, the strongest trade union center in Spain, controlled by anarcho-syndicalists, and now by the "pure" anarchists), the Maurinists have been making the most desperate efforts to gain a real foothold there. In this field too, the vulgar opportunism of this Right wing group bobs to the surface. In order to lend himself the appearance of a strength he does not possess, Maurin talks constantly of the all-saving heed of a united front in which no other organization, not even the official Communist party, figures at all. The syndicalists and the anarchists do not even bother to reply to Maurin's fantastic proposals and schemes. For, with all the insistence upon his "Leninist correctness", Maurin has developed

loyalty, their violence and their slander we will also present our bill for their treachery to Morgenstern and Goodman. In their actions in this case there is revealed, as by a premonitory flash, what these people will be capable of in the future when events will put the great class questions categorically, when no one will be able to dissimulate, to hide or to evade. The day of reckoning will come. Let us hope that it will come before their course unfolds its ultimate logic in a catastrophe for the movement. The names of Morgenstern and Goodman will be a banner for us in the fight to hasten on that day.

—J. P. C.

The Litvinoff Stand on Disarmament

The "Disarmament Conference of the great imperialist powers is taking place at a time of the moral collapse of bourgeois pacifism. In the face of the bloody Sino-Japanese conflict, the bankruptcy of the Kellogg Pact, the League of Nations and the various other designs of the imperialists to fool the masses with illusory perspectives of international peace, the imperialists in Geneva feel the shaking of the very foundations of their "peace" institutions. The masses in capitalist countries who are suffering, starving and in a state of fear of an approaching world conflict of unheard of dimensions, have lost their confidence in their present rulers. They seek a new world, for an inspiring thought that would show them the way out of their torturous conditions. Who could be expected to bring them that inspiration if not a representation of the Soviet Union, who could present the exploited and deceived masses that vitally needed message in their hour of desperation, if not the builders of a free working land?

The opportunity to fulfill this historic mission was conferred upon M. Litvinoff by the Soviet Government. Litvinoff did fulfill his mission, but in a tragic manner. His proposals for peace at the Geneva Conference were disappointing and if they had any value at all, it was that of soothing the shattered nerves of the imperialist diplomats and morally strengthening the tottering structure of the so-called League of Nations, the Kellogg Pact and other schemes of deceiving the masses. Litvinoff's proposals may also have the effect of reinforcing the hopes of the soft-boned, chicken-hearted liberals and social-democrats who are shivering in this pacifist fraud with the imperialists. The workers of the capitalist countries, the millions of unemployed, could not read anything out of Litvinoff's proposals.

What did Litvinoff propose—a remedy against war? He proposed disarmament to the capitalist governments, total disarmament, if acceptable, partial, if more practical. How well it fitted in with the program of the Conference and its objectives! The Conference is out to accomplish just this modest task of reducing armaments. They all talk about it. They all offer plans to achieve it. Litvinoff's proposals were just appropriate for the occasion. Besides, he is moderate and conciliatory. He is ready to compromise on a plan of partial disarmament so as not to appear "impractical" to the imperialists. In a word he was obliging

and willing to cooperate. If there was any distinction between his proposals and those of the French or Italian delegates, that distinction was only technical, but not in essence. As put by the New York Times correspondent: "Litvinoff completes the circle of these suggestions. As was fitting for the delegates of the New Russia he went to the extreme limit." Litvinov repeatedly emphasized, "The only way to prevent war is general and total disarmament." This half truth is the crux of the whole problem. As a Marxist, Litvinoff must know that this half truth lies at the foundation of bourgeois pacifism and that it is an utterly false theory. He must know that according to Marx, wars are inevitable under capitalism. He did not, however, mention a word about the abolition of the capitalist system as a condition sine qua non of the abolition of wars. He did not as much as suggest the necessity for the international proletariat to achieve the international revolution if not in their own interests, at any rate in the interests of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, he said, "The sole aim of the Soviet government is to build up socialism in the Soviet Union." In other words, the Soviet government wished to be assured by the capitalist governments that their capitalistic nature will not assert itself in regard to the Soviet Union.

The same New York Times correspondent remarks, that, "In international quarters, the Soviet delegation was credited with being marked with moderation and as likely to increase the possibility of success for the Conference." Surely, the correspondent has in mind the moral success of the imperialist leaders of the Conference. Thus Litvinoff's mission instead of being an inspiration to the international proletariat has turned into its opposite by rendering moral success to international imperialism. Such is the logic of Stalinist dialectics. Litvinoff went to the "extreme limit" of this logic.

For the sake of comparison with the true Bolshevik-Leninist attitude taken by another representative of the Soviet government, we shall quote from Obichervin's note to President Wilson in reply to his message to the U. S. Congress of January 18, 1918, on the question of the League of Nations and the conditions for World Peace. Dated October 24, 1918:

"But the League of Nations must not only settle the present war. It must make all wars impossible. It cannot be unknown to you, Mr. President, that

an idea for Spain which has few if any rivals in recent revolutionary history. He approaches the C. N. T. with the plan that it should take power! Neither more or less. The patent ridiculous of the very idea being propounded to precisely those elements—anarchists and syndicalists—subsequently made it necessary for Maurin to retreat a bit on the slogan.

Maurin spent some time trying to convince me that his group had never raised the slogan of "All Power to the C. N. T.!" They had proposed, he claimed, the slogan of "All Power to the Proletariat!" Unfortunately for Maurin, I read that very evening a copy of the popular agitational organ printed in the Catalan tongue and edited by Miravittles, in which the slogan of "All Power to the C. N. T.!" was repeated and elaborated upon. Later on, a copy of Maurin's official organ, *La Batalla*, reprints an interview which he granted the Buenos Aires *La Nacion*, in which he says literally:

"The Trotskyist faction is insignificant. It is made up of a few dozen more or less unknown intellectuals. Its specific weight is practically null. Towards the Spanish Revolution, they take a completely Right (!) position. They advocate that the working class cannot yet aspire to taking the power when it has no constituted Soviet organization. They propose as a solution that the Socialist party should assume the power. Their reformist social democratic past weighs down upon them enormously. The Workers' and Peasants' Bloc contends that the working class should take the power. And through the medium of hypo-betric Soviets but with the aid of the existing organizations. Without being syndicalists, we believe that the syndicates (trade unions) can be powerful instruments in the taking of power by the proletariat. We propagate the taking of the power by the C. N. T. We will lend all our aid to a syndicalist government."

What a "syndicalist government" would look like, what it is, what its ingredients are, what it resembles—remain secrets sealed with seven unbreakable seals which have not even been opened. It is hard to believe that Maurin does not "know better"; it is the plan of the Right wing opportunists, however, to win the syndicalist workers by this slogan; what is gained, in actuality, is the muddying of the waters and the spread of confusion among the workers. In this respect the Catalonian Right wing is no different from its sisters-under-the-skin in other countries. Maurin is clever enough, by the way, not to affiliate with the Brandlerist "International". It would gain him absolutely nothing, for he knows what this "International" is worth, and it might shut the door for him to re-entry into the official party on his own terms, i. e., as party leader. He told me that Brandler had sent a letter of inquiry, and that B. D. Wolfe, of the Lovestone group, had also written to attempt to establish relations. But the wily Maurin wants to have nothing to do with the rest of the Right wing, although he is blood relative to them. Yet he is like Brandler and Lovestone in that he is prepared to criticize the effects of Stalinism in any country in the world—except in the U. S. S. R., where, apparently, the ordinary laws of the physical and mental sciences no longer operate.

It should not be thought that Maurin is in any mood to capitulate on Stalin's terms. He is too flushed with the progress of the Bloc to do that. Already, a delegation of the Comintern containing such stars as Bela Kun and Humbert-Droz has visited Spain for the main purpose of winning over the Federation. But so compromised and discredited is the official party among the workers there, that the Maurin machine was able to nullify practically all the arduous labors of the delegation. Out of the thousands "available", the C. I. got only about three score comrades, led by Arlandis and Sese, who demanded of Maurin that he actually unite with the official party instead of merely writing appeals on the subject. Maurin, who is always ready with an elaborate speech on the absence of democratic procedure on the part of the right to speak freely in the official party, promptly expelled the whole group of Arlandis and Sese. Here, by the way, a little burlesque was enacted. Arlandis and Sese immediately shouted with the fiercest passion that bureaucracy had gripped the vitals of the Federation, that Maurin was a dictator, that the rank and file could no longer discuss the problems of the revolutionary movement, that expulsions were a bureaucratic answer to criticisms, etc., etc. Their cries had little effect, for only a short weeks before their own expulsion, they themselves, together with Maurin "the dictator", had engineered the expulsion of members of the Federation who sympathized with the Left Opposition and insisted upon discussing the disputed issues—comrades Molins, de Cabo and others. It all depends upon whose ox is yoked!

The Comintern failed to break Maurin's power in Catalonia primarily because the alternative it had to offer caused the Communist workers to shrink away. In this case as in all others, almost everything depends upon the party. An incompetent party, which refuses to learn and therefore cannot teach and lead, will never produce big results. The Stalinization of the Spanish Communist Party is being paid for today by having thousands of militant workers and peasants led deeper into the swamp of compromise and confusion by the scheme of Joaquin Maurin.

Not having an influence over the decisive sections of the industrial workers, particularly those organized in the C. N. T. (National Confederation of Labor, the strongest trade union center in Spain, controlled by anarcho-syndicalists, and now by the "pure" anarchists), the Maurinists have been making the most desperate efforts to gain a real foothold there. In this field too, the vulgar opportunism of this Right wing group bobs to the surface. In order to lend himself the appearance of a strength he does not possess, Maurin talks constantly of the all-saving heed of a united front in which no other organization, not even the official Communist party, figures at all. The syndicalists and the anarchists do not even bother to reply to Maurin's fantastic proposals and schemes. For, with all the insistence upon his "Leninist correctness", Maurin has developed

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—MAX SHACHTMAN.