

# Socialist Party Adopts "Militant" Position at Detroit Convention

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cratic methods? Do we want to resort to violence?"

The veteran Ohio Right Winger, Joseph Sharts, went his fellow attorneys from New York one better and flatly stated that if he had to choose between the flag and "red revolution" he would follow the flag. This brought such a violent demonstration against him that the chairman of the day, Vladek, threatened to "clear the galleries". There was no suggestion to throw Sharts out of the meeting, although someone shouted, "You have no place in the Socialist Party."

Powers Haggood, in speaking for the resolution, declared that it was not fully satisfactory to him and to other left wing delegates. He said it should be amended not to the right but to the left; that the workers object to the S. P. not because it is too radical but because it is not radical enough. Dan Hoon the Mayor of Milwaukee, however, assured the terrified members of the Old Guard, who are comfortably enjoying their "socialism" right now in the form of substantial incomes and other emoluments, that they were unduly alarmed. This resolution, he said, doesn't go as far as the St. Louis resolution. And, besides, he added slyly, we didn't carry out the St. Louis resolution.

The sections in the "Declaration of Principles" which evoked such a stormy debate read as follows:

**"The Socialist Party is opposed to militarism, imperialism and war. It purposes to eradicate the perpetual economic warfare of capitalism the fruit of which is international conflict. War cannot be tolerated by Socialists, or preparedness for war. They will unitedly seek to develop trustworthy instruments for the peaceable settlement of international disputes and conflicts. They will seek to eliminate military training from schools, colleges and camps. They will oppose military reviews, displays and expenditures, whether for direct war preparedness or for militaristic propaganda, both in wartime and peacetime. They will loyally support, in the tragic event of war, any of their comrades who for anti-war activities or refusal to perform war service, come into conflict with public opinion or the law. Moreover, recognizing the suicidal nature of modern combat and the incalculable strain of war's consequences which rest most heavily upon the working class, they will refuse collectively to sanction or support any international war; they will, on the contrary, by agitation and opposition, do their best not to be broken by the war, but to break up the war. They will meet war and the detailed plans for war already mapped out by the war-making arms of the government, by massed war resistance, organized so far as practicable in a general strike of labor unions and professional groups in a united effort to make the waging of war a practically impossible and to convert the capitalist war crisis into a victory for socialism.**

"In its struggle for a new society, the Socialist Party seeks to attain its objectives by peaceful and orderly means. Recognizing the increasing resort by a crumbling capitalist order to Fascism to preserve its integrity and dominance, the Socialist Party intends not to be deceived by Fascist propaganda nor overwhelmed by Fascist force. It will do all in its power to fight Fascism of every kind all the time and everywhere in the world, until Fascism is dead. It will rely, nevertheless, on the organization of a disciplined labor movement. Its methods may include a recourse to a general strike which will not merely serve as a defense against Fascist counter-revolution but will carry the revolutionary struggle into the camp of the enemy.

"The Socialist Party proclaims anew its faith in economic and political democracy, but it unhesitatingly applies itself to the task of replacing the bogus democracy of capitalist parliamentarism by a genuine workers' democracy. Capitalism is doomed. If it can be superseded by majority vote, the Socialist Party will rejoice. If the crisis comes through the denial of majority rights after the electorate has given us a mandate we shall not hesitate to crush by our labor solidarity the reckless forces of reaction and to consolidate the Socialist State. If the capitalist system should collapse in a general chaos and confusion, which cannot permit of orderly procedure, the Socialist Party, whether or not in such a case it is a majority, will not shrink from the responsibility of organizing and maintaining a government under the workers' rule. True democracy is a worthy means to progress; but true democ-

cracy must be created by the workers of the world."

If we take the three main points dealt with in the declaration—war, the state and revolution, and the fight against Fascism—it is easy to see that a straightforward revolutionary answer, proceeding from theory and experience, has not been given in a single case. To be sure, the declaration marks a sharp departure from the position and practice of the international social democracy from 1914 to the collapse in Germany and Austria. That is why the Old Guard, which has learned nothing and forgotten nothing, fought it so bitterly.

Centrism has rearsen and come to dominance in the international Social Democracy precisely because the old methods of social reformism have brought such ignominious defeat and have been so thoroughly discredited. A change in front has become an imperative necessity in order to hold the organizations together and regain the confidence of the workers. This is the role of Centrism. The revolutionary impulses of the workers are met with general formulations which sound extremely radical but which do not mean anything specifically. The Detroit declaration abounds in these treacherous and deceptive formulations. It is a classic document of Centrism.

The resolution promises a general strike against war—which is a myth, impossible of realization in the face of a war mobilization.

And even this is qualified to read, "insofar as practicable". Which is a way of saying, "We are only talking about a general strike; we don't really mean it." And in truth that is how many of the proponents of the resolution understand this bombast. That war is inevitable under capitalism, that it cannot be prevented or defeated by any other form of passive resistance, that the only answer to war, in fact, is revolution—civil war, or the preparation for it—on all these main aspects of the question of war the resolution either remains silent, or speaks falsely, or resorts to ambiguous allusions and hints which may be interpreted one way or another.

The resolution promises to fight Fascism "all the time and everywhere in the world" and even to "carry the revolutionary struggle into the camp of the enemy". Brave words! But all that, including the general strike to which the resolution says the S. P. "may" resort, was proclaimed by the German and Austrian Social Democratic parties with no less bluster. Will the S.P. form a united front with all workers' organizations against Fascism? Will it teach the workers that the Fascist bands must be beaten down by their own methods before they have the chance to get the upper hand? Will it explain to the workers that the answer to Fascist violence is the Workers' Militia and that it must be formed on the basis of the united front before the Fascists get state power, not afterward? No. On this crucial question, as on all others, the resolution of the Detroit convention says nothing clearly, specifically and unambiguously. That is why such a conglomeration of different tendencies could unite to vote for it. The resolution was designed as a catch-all for votes, not as a clear guide to the workers in the fight against Fascism.

On the question of the state and revolution the Detroit convention adopted the formula of the American Workers' Party which had been put into circulation long ago by the late Morris Hillquit. The S. P. task "of replacing the bogus democracy of capitalist parliamentarism by a genuine workers' democracy". Just what this workers' democracy is to look like is not explained. Is it the dictatorship of the proletariat? Some delegates thought so and for that reason accepted it. Other delegates thought the contrary and voted for it with that understanding. Like the resolution as a whole the expression "workers' democracy" is a vote-catcher, not a clear guide for the education and action of the workers.

The resolution omits any mention of the revolutionary struggle to establish the so-called workers' democracy. Instead of that it refers to the possibility that capitalism "can be superseded by a majority vote". If the rights of the majority are then denied the forces of reaction are to be crushed "by our labor solidarity". With the aid of such empty verbiage as this, such treacherous double-meaning formulations which satisfy people of divergent views, the "Militants", who express a progressive tendency in the ranks of the party, the Revolutionary Policy Committee, which had set itself up as the spokesman of the revolutionary left wing, and the Municipal Socialists of Milwaukee, who think it is time to become a bit more radical—they all got together on the basis of the new "De-

claration of Principles" to present a new face to the working class of America. But it is not the face of revolutionary socialism.

By this statement I do not mean to deny that profound changes are taking place in the ranks of the S. P. and that the convention at Detroit reflected this process of change. A real movement to the left is under way. It has not yet formulated its position clearly, nor has it found its authentic leaders. The rapid transformation now taking place in the Socialist ranks is marked by a great deal of confusion and contradiction. The Centrists who dominated the Detroit convention exploited this confusion and rode to power with it.

Will they be able now, by a partial turn of the party to the left, to arrest further developments? The answer to that question rests first of all with the revolutionary militants in the party. There are quite a few of them already. They will increase and multiply to the extent that they understand the role of centrism as a barrier to revolutionary progress and wage an unremitting war against it.

I hope to return to this question and to other aspects of the Detroit convention in future articles.

-JAMES P. CANNON.

# Mussolini Sets An Example of "Disarmament"

What may be expected from the "Disarmament" conferences is indicated in a speech by Mussolini in his Chamber of Deputies on May 26th. Italy will spend 1,000,000,000 lire on battleships and a similar amount on its air fleet. This, he remarked sardonically, was done because "disarmament had at last come". The construction of the battleships and aeroplanes will be carried out in spite of a deficit of 1,000,000,000 lire in the budget. Will the budget be "balanced" by taxing the bankers and industrialists? Oh no! As usual the workers have to carry the burden of paying for the war preparations. "We are probably moving toward a period of humanity reposing on a lower standard of life. We must not be alarmed by this prospect (!). Present-day humanity is very strong and is capable of asceticism (!!) such as we perhaps have no conception of". This is his consoling advice to the Italian workers. It was also necessary, he stressed, to lower the cost of production so Italy could face the competition of other nations in the international market. This process he warned would call for a general lowering of salaries and wages.

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# A Criticism of the Draft Program of The American Workers Party

In the May Day issue of *Labor Action* we are informed by comrade Sidney Hook that: "One of the most significant features of the Draft Program of the A.W.P. is that it breaks with the fetishism of terms in the revolutionary tradition." We take this to mean that new terms are being used for certain ideas already accepted as correct. And since it is a program that is under discussion the question of whether these correct ideas are actually maintained becomes the essential one.

In his answer to this question comrade Hook says: "For the first time in the history of the American revolutionary parties an attempt has been made to present in intelligible fashion the essential meaning content of such terms as 'dictatorship of the proletariat', 'soviets', etc." Further, on in the same article we are admonished that it is "high time to abandon the linguistic fixations which obstruct clear thinking."

After that follows the explanation of the term used in the A.W.P. program in presenting what it assumes to be the meaning and the content of the dictatorship of the proletariat. And here we arrive at the crux of the problem. What is presented as a break with the fetishism

of terms is a substitution which changes, or certainly at least, completely obscures the correct idea. Instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a characterization of the workers' state during the period of transition from capitalism to communism the term "workers' democracy" is used.

It is this substitution that comrade Hook defends in his article entitled "Marxism and Democracy" in which he uses a Marxian terminology but distorts the essential "meaning-content" of Marxism.

In its defense comrade Hook says: "Today for historical reasons it is necessary to stress more than ever before the facts that the workers' state is a workers' democracy." And further on he adds: "The workers' democracy must be counterposed to the capitalist dictatorship in its representative liberal form as well as its fascist form."

Of course, under a fascist regime, and against fascism, democratic demands and demands for workers' democracy assume unusual importance. But that is primarily in the sense of agitation and tactical approach to the masses. That, on the other hand, the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transition period signifies a broader democracy than hitherto known is absolutely correct. It signifies a workers' democracy in contradistinction to bourgeois democracy. This is an essential part of that form of state. But that alone does not characterize the content of the workers' state. It is only one of its aspects. The workers' state, to maintain itself in power, must suppress the exploiters who held power before and take away their private property in the means of production as well as eliminate them from the government. It represents a new class rule which makes workers' democracy possible. It is because of these facts that in describing our conception of the workers' state we use the term "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Is it not correct to say that the spirit of Marx's teachings consist of the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat? It is also assumed that the A.W.P. aims to become a Marxian party. But how does it come, that it is presently in this vital point that its presentation in "intelligible fashion" so closely approximates Norman Thomas when he argued against the left wing in the Socialist Party. He put it this way: "Even in a transitional period the ideal to hold up and to work for is workers' democracy rather than a dictatorship of the proletariat, which means the dictatorship of one party."

The comrades of the A.W.P. want to distinguish themselves from the social-reformists and from their conception. Comrade Hook will argue that this conception has nothing in common with what he meant. He has also told us before what he thinks Marx meant. He is well acquainted with Marx although

his views are very far from being Marxist views. Comrade Hook and the other A.W.P. comrades will point to the section in their draft program which says: "The revolutionary government must be prepared to meet the violence of the overthrown but still dangerous capitalist dictatorship. Against the forces of reaction, seeking to recall the old order, the workers must fight with every weapon to establish their own democracy. Against capitalist legality . . . must be set revolutionary legality . . ." etc. And how is this to be achieved? According to the Draft Program of the A.W.P. "a time will come when the major sections of the population will support the principles of a workers' democracy. As a measure of defense against the suicidal course of capitalist dictatorship, the workers will take power."

This sounds simple enough. But what is lacking here in strategy flows from the conception the authors have of the workers' state. However, the question of strategy we leave aside for the moment. What is said here about the workers' state, we grant, reads better than comrade Hook's interpretation; nevertheless its shortcomings are demonstrated more clearly by these interpretations. It is just such interpretations and such ambiguities which make possible for those in the A.W.P., who say openly that they are opposed to all dictatorships, to stand with those who claim to be revolutionists on the same program. Thus what is presented as abandoning "linguistic fixations which obstruct clear thinking" is in reality a lack of clear thinking, or to be more precise—a lack of revolutionary thinking. The intention of the authors may have been the best but "the road to hell is paved with good intentions."

In the program of the revolutionary party ideas and exactness must be defined with absolute exactness. We would say that this must particularly apply today to the question of the proletarian dictatorship; and there are good reasons for that. A look at the world movement will convince us that this has become the burning issue with socialist workers adopting a leftward course. On the question of the proletarian dictatorship, they begin to express their break with the whole content and heritage of social reformism. In all of the recent European experiences this is one of the issues which stand out the most clearly. The leftward moving socialist workers begin to give an evaluation of the proletarian dictatorship and counterpose it in name and essence to the social reformist concept of defense of bourgeois democracy which helped to strangle the proletarian revolution. They witnessed the perfidious part played by social reformism in these European events and they also notice the Stalinist bureaucratic apparatus measures which distort the character of the workers' state. In view of this, a party proclaiming itself to be revolutionary, can least of all permit the real meaning of the proletarian dictatorship to become obscured.

Marxism constitutes a generalization of all working-class experience. This means that for Marxists it is necessary to absorb every new experience gained. If we fail to learn from the most recent ones, from those most fresh in our mind, we shall not be able to learn at all. The A.W.P. cannot proceed as if there were no such experience before it appeared on the scene. Most certainly it cannot assume to be a revolutionary party when proceeding in that way.

Comrade Hook says that the great mass of American workers are non-political and that they must therefore be shown the true democracy—workers' democracy—against the false democracy under capitalism. That is well and good insofar as agitation amongst the masses is concerned. In that it is necessary to adapt one's methods to requirements of existing conditions. But the revolutionary program is an entirely different matter. It is the guide to action and its primary purpose is therefore the education of the party itself. Accepting comrade Hook's interpretations, the shortcomings in the A.W.P. Draft Program become really a matter of adaptation not in methods and approach but adaptation of position. It becomes an adaptation of the program to the prejudices of the backward workers. The result will be neither a revolutionary program nor a revolutionary party. It will repel the advanced workers, and fail to educate the backward workers for they can be educated only through the advanced workers, through the revolutionary section.

The most important historical instrument in the epoch of wars and revolutions is the party of the proletariat. But it can attain its objective only on the basis of its own clarity of principle.

-ARNE SWABECK.

# Will the Soviet Union Join the League of Nations?

The policy of socialism in one country is reaping a new and mighty success. The Soviet Union is about to be accepted into the League of Nations. At the same time that Sarraut and Doumergue are deporting Trotsky from France, the French foreign minister Barthou is negotiating with Litvinoff on the condition for the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations.

The existence of the League of Nations was in reality seriously endangered. Japan and Germany had once more convincingly proved its impotence, even Paraguay and Bolivia flouted it. The differences between France and England threatened to tear it asunder. The League of Nations explodes—a harsh melody in the prelude to the witches' Sabbath of the coming World War. For the immediate present, however, the open collapse would have meant the destruction of all the efforts of French diplomacy of the post-war period, would have destroyed the very last vestige of France's hegemony on the continent. As a result it is for French foreign diplomacy a matter of tremendous importance to save the League of Nations and pour new life into it. The preservation of the League of Nations means for France the preservation of the system of Versailles, the stabilization of the French brigands peace. This French policy now finds a new support in the Soviet Union. The acceptance of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations lends this bankrupt institution a new shimmer. At best only the Swiss Cheeses and the Dutch Cleansers fear the Soviet Union as a revolutionary force whereas the French bourgeoisie has already long ago realized the truth of the statement which a Russian "revolutionary" diplomat sarcastically expressed to Paul Bourcour, "You ought to be happy that a Communist Party exists in France, otherwise the revolution would long ago have been made."

# Petty Bourgeois Pacifists Will Greet This Move

Not for nothing does the fight against real proletarian revolutionaries, against Trotsky and the Fourth International, find Stalin and Doumergue allied with each other. The social traitors and petty bourgeois pacifists of all countries, however, become positively ecstatic as a result of the move of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union prevents the bankruptcy of the petty bourgeois policy of pacifism from becoming too apparent. Henderson's pleasure trips in the name of disarmament will now be backed by Litvinoff's authority. Moreover, the leftward trend in the English proletariat pushes the Labor Party politicians directly toward the formation of a new Anglo-Russian Committee. All the easier for them if the League of Nations now assumes this role.

And how can the official Communist parties of all countries condemn the reformists and their petty bourgeois pacifist qualities which objectively further imperialism and militarism? If the imperialist powers, France and England have become "guarantors of world peace" in the eyes of the Soviet Union, and the maintenance of peace at any price—even at the price of abandoning revolutionary policy—is held up as the supreme aim of Soviet foreign policy, how can the French Communists still attack French imperialism and militarism? French militarism, plundering and bloodily suppressing Tunis and Morocco,

English imperialism, enslaving defenseless Indians and fellahs have become in the terminology of Soviet diplomacy, guarantors of peace!

# What Will the Comintern Do?

With this we have arrived at the most important problem which is connected with the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations, —namely, what are the consequences of this step for the Comintern? Characteristic by the way, of the incredible decay of the Comintern and the scorn with which Stalin treats it, is the fact that the Daily of the Danish Stalinists, the Copenhagen Arbejderblad reports the interview of Barthou with Litvinoff a day later than the bourgeois press, adding to the caption "THE SOVIET IN THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS" a question mark. This question mark reveals far more deeply the pitiful political role which Stalin's Comintern hirelings play than ten theoretical articles of ours could do. The Soviet Union enters the League of Nations! Should that not be discussed beforehand in the Comintern and all its sections even down to the lowest unit? Should not a world congress or at least an enlarged E.C.C.I. plenum pass a resolution upon this? Or is it no concern of the revolutionary workers of the world, what sort of a foreign policy their fatherland is pursuing? In place of this, news of this import appears in the Communist press with the introduction "according to the bourgeois press"! And the revolutionary editors are not even conscious of their miserable role.

# And what sort of a policy will the Comintern pursue from now on as regards the League of Nations?

Did not the Dutchman Wijnkoop—a another miserable capitulator of the Comintern—under the pressure of the revolutionary criticism of the League of Nations by our comrade Sneevliet in the Dutch Parliament only a few months ago deliver a thundering attack against this instrument of the French, English and Dutch imperialists "dropping with blood and dirt"? What will the poor Wijnkoops of all countries do now? They will have to learn by heart the foreign policy speeches of their colleagues of the "social-fascist" faction. Must not the result of the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations force the French Communists into a truce with their own bourgeoisie?

# What the German Stalinists Say

And just at the same moment—in the Rundschau of May 9th—appears the "revised program of social and national liberation" of the Central Committee of the C. P. G. Once more seven whole paragraphs are dedicated to the "peace of infamy of Versailles" which Hitler cannot get rid of. These formulations close with the words:

"The proletarian revolution, the revolutionary working class, under our leadership; that is, the one and only force which can smash the brigands treaty of Versailles, do away with all the burdens of tribute (we wonder if some day the news will get to Heckert's ear, that Germany has for a long time not paid one pfennig.—W. II.) and open the gates of the empire for the voluntary union of all toiling Germans (only for the Germans? Perhaps according to the principle, 'A German is he who is an Aryan'?—W. II.)"

To set up the liberation from the Versailles Treaty as one of the chief aims of the proletarian revolution in Germany in the present situation means that one must sup-

port a possible war of Hitler's which has this as its goal. It means objectively lending the services of a helper's helper to the Fascist neo-imperialists.

# Need for Fourth International

For the honest proletarian revolutionaries, in the ranks of the Third International, however, the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations will be an eye-opener to the necessity of the new revolutionary Fourth International which wages an unyielding international battle against the imperialists of all countries. The workers will recognize more and more that only a battle of this kind can really save the Soviet Union from destruction. The Doumergues, Baldwin and Mussolins will in a serious test prove themselves far more unreliable "supporters" of the Soviet Union than the Chiang-kai-sheks, Wang-tin-weis, Purcells and Citrines in the years 1925 to 1927. It will be one of the duties of the new international to take away the commanding posts of the first proletarian state from the opportunistic servants of international imperialism in order to fill them with determined proletarian world revolutionists.

# Militant Builders

"Minneapolis Shows the Way"

Minneapolis showed how revolutionary Communists, who have the general interests of the workers at heart, instead of their own sectarian party interests, can lead a strike to a successful finish and come out of it with a union of 7,000 members. All this was not accomplished overnight by some magical formula of a quick road to "mass work" as some of our impatient critics have been demanding of us. It was accomplished by working slowly and fundamentally, preparing every step in advance.

According to indications, the C.L.A. branch in Minneapolis will double its membership soon. This too is not merely the result of the splendid work our comrades did during the strike. It is due in a large measure to the fact that the Minneapolis comrades have been busy circulating the MILITANT among the workers for a long period. In this field too, "Minneapolis Shows the Way."

In the first Club Plan sub drive, the Minneapolis branch sent in 128 new subscriptions. In the second drive they have already purchased 40 cards. In addition to these 40 cards which they have not yet disposed of they have 150 subscribers and they receive a bundle of 100 copies weekly, paying for them in full at the end of each month. During the strike, they received an additional bundle of 500 copies weekly for which they have already paid.

Now, after their hard and stubborn Jimmy Higgins work in connection with getting the workers of Minneapolis to read the MILITANT, our comrades there are beginning to reap the results of their devoted labors. Undoubtedly, many of the most militant fighters during the strike were from the ranks of those

who had been reading our paper previously. What Minneapolis did, other cities can do too when the circumstances present themselves.

Every time you get a new reader of the MILITANT, you get a prospective fighter in the class struggle and a possible member of the Communist League of America.

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Newark Branch	4
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(City Office	28)
(Harlem Br.	4)
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