

Oneal Makes His Report

Confidential Memorandum of Right Wing to Second Internat'l Shows Reactionary Contempt Towards Young Militants

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struggles which were of a vital interest to the working class as a whole.

But when the United States entered the World War, the American Federation of Labor and the majority of the unions supported the war whereas the Socialist Party became an anti-war party. The old Socialist militants who survived the persecutions of the war period think that their position was right, that they could not have acted differently.

The different positions of the trade unions and of the Socialist Party toward the war alienated these two movements from each other. This marked the end of the collaboration between the two movements. With very few exceptions, the trade union movement slipped towards a conservative policy and the Party became isolated from the organized working class. While we were thus isolated, the war came to an end and the Party had to fight against a powerfully organized Communist movement in its midst which led to the splitting of the Party in 1919. Three Communist parties were organized by former members of the Socialist Party, while inside the Party there still remained members influenced by Moscow. The fight inside the Party continued for a number of years, producing a serious loss of membership; the morale of the Party continued to decline and discouragement took hold everywhere.

Contrary to the European countries, the United States emerged from the World War prosperous. Generally speaking, the workers were content and Socialist propaganda made no progress among them. With the exception of a slight depression in 1921-22, the period from 1916 to 1929 may be called the Golden Age of American capitalism. There was relatively little unemployment, and wages and working conditions were, on the whole, satisfactory to the workers.

In the course of this period, the Communist organizations conducted a violent war upon the trades unions and the Socialist Party. In certain cases the Communists destroyed the trade union organizations and exhausted the workers before the employers. The trades unions, for their part, declared war upon the Communists. However, they did not yet establish with sufficient clarity the distinction between the Communist and the Socialist position, with the result that our Party was looked upon with suspicion if not with a virtual hostility by a large part of the organized workers. It must be said that certain Socialists, notably among the numerous so-called "intellectuals" and among the inexperienced youth, whom our position against the war had attracted into the Party, did a good deal to provoke this hostility by their harsh criticism of the trade union movement. Meanwhile, there was also a decline in the membership of the Communist Party, and bitter internal struggles provoked expulsions and splits.

The Crisis

The great industrial crisis which began in October, 1929, produced a new situation. The Socialist Party which numbered more than 100,000 members in 1919, had fallen down to less than 10,000 members. With the sharpening of the crisis, new elements joined the Party. The growth was not very consistent and even today the membership is only about 18,000. Many of the new members were young people who had just quit high schools or colleges and there was a considerable difference in age between the Party veterans and the new members, which produced an abnormal situation leading to conflicts and disharmony. Ignorant of the objective conditions which led to the decline of the Party, of the Communist movement and of the trade union movement, the younger elements concluded that the veterans were responsible for the weakness of the Party.

At the same time, the trades unions were, at the outset, so absorbed by the problems raised by the crisis, and which even threatened certain trades unions with disruption, that it was difficult to recruit members for the Party among them. However, with the continuation of the crisis, the trades unions little by little abandoned a number of their views and their conservative policies. Up till then they had been very little interested in social legislation. But since 1929 they have progressively changed their attitude and they are now fighting for numerous important measures of this kind, and the prejudices against the Socialist Party are disappearing little by little. In the meantime, the Communists continue their intrigues within the trade unions and toward the end of 1934 the American Federation of Labor issued a new manifesto declaring war on the Communist movement.

Since 1932

The conflict inside the Party came out into the open at the National Party Convention held in 1932, when the new elements sought

to remove Morris Hillquit from his post as National Chairman. Hillquit, while going to the extreme limit in his attempts to reconcile the diverse elements and to contribute to harmony inside the Party, had a clear and firm position on the fundamental questions of principles and tactics. He always considered that it would be impossible to build up a genuine Socialist movement in the political field unless mutually friendly relations and collaboration between the Socialist Party and the American trade union movement were established. He also considered that in view of the very nature of American institutions, it was an indispensable condition to all progress and all Socialist success to base ourselves entirely upon democratic and constitutional methods of political action. And that is why, since 1922, he had more and more violently condemned every attempt to flirt with the Communists and their sympathizers and had just as vigorously opposed the Socialist Party being drawn into alliances with various types of bourgeois reformists.

The essence of the question at the Milwaukee Convention was not the personality of Morris Hillquit but the conception of Socialism which he held. However, during the underground campaign which was conducted against him for several months, especially outside of New York City, his opponents spoke of "Americanizing" the Party, and on the fact that he was a foreigner by birth, accused him of submitting to the old traditions of the European movement, and also made use of the popular prejudice against New York which is intimately linked with American nationalism and with the agrarian tendencies of the south and the west. Hillquit was reelected by a very small majority, but his opponents obtained a strong representation in the new National Executive Committee; he was then afflicted by his illness which ended with his death in October, 1933, and which gave them the upper hand.

When the National Convention met in June 1934, the division inside the Party had become very serious and the events in Europe had contributed to increase further the fundamental differences of opinion. The defeat of the working class in Germany and in Austria, the seizure of power by the Nazis, the danger of a new war, and the discouragement which resulted from the continuation of the crisis, had strong repercussions upon the immature mind of the membership and above all, upon our youth. They began to despise cynically the whole European movement and argued that the defeat was due to the "old policies and the old leaders." They argued that the program of the Party had to be radically revised "to the Left."

Inside the Party, a very distinct Communist faction was formed and various Communist groups blandly sent their members into the Party and into the youth organization in order to "bore from within." The new elements obtained the majority on the National Executive Committee during this convention, which also adopted a new Declaration of Principles which aroused controversies like the like of which had not been seen in so violent a form since the struggle with the Communists in 1919. United front attempts with Communist organizations also contributed to the conflict.

The new Declaration was adopted by the membership in a referendum by a vote of 5,933 against 4,872, that is, by a majority of 1,061. Its opponents declared that it was a step towards a Communist declaration and its supporters denied it. The Oregon state organization withdrew from the Party and the Indiana state organization organized a referendum for withdrawal from the Party when its charter was suspended and later revoked. The struggle between the two groups continued. In November, 1934, the vote for the Party declined in five or six states, and in these states a strong decline in membership was recorded. Altogether the Party lost 5,500 members, the activities of the Party were paralyzed and the National Bureau was incapable of gathering the funds necessary for the continuation of its work.

Another argument against the new Declaration was that a score of states or even more had adopted draconic anti-syndicalist laws which endanger the very existence of any party which alluded to the use of any form of violence or illegal methods for the accomplishment of its aims. The Oregon Socialists withdrew from the Party because of a severe anti-syndicalist law existing in this state, because they believed that by accepting the new Declaration the Party would be unable to continue its activities.

The United Front

Since the Russian Revolution, the Socialist Party had followed an unchanging policy with regard to Soviet Russia. It demanded the recognition of Russia and the establishment of trade relations with

Soviet Russia, while rejecting all the united front offers which it received from Communist organizations, and demanding the restoration of democracy for the Russian working class. This was the Party policy up to the 1932 convention when a tendency manifested itself, changed this policy in favor of a united front with various Communist organizations for "specific aims." This also contributed to extend the conflict existing in the Party.

The entire trade union movement was mortally opposed to the Communist movement and the Socialist veterans considered that to conclude a united front with the Communists would be to conclude a united front against the organized working class. It would be to abandon the fraternal relations which were developing between the Party and the trades unions in spite of the internal conflict in the Party. The Party organization of New York State, the oldest state organization, counting the largest number of members, was the most categorical in its opposition to the united front and in its opposition to the new Declaration of Principles. That is why the State of New York was the center of the Party conflicts.

The Youth Movement

These various ideological solutions and tendencies in turn affected the organization of the Socialist youth (Y.P.S.L.). It was influenced by all the "Leftist" forms of ideology and politics. In two months it produced two Communist groupings, one of which joined the Trotskyists en bloc. At its last National Convention, it raised the age limit to 30 years which, if it is permitted, will make it a rival party to the Socialist Party. In New York City the local section of the youth movement came into conflict with the Party organization, which resulted in a split within this section, but as a result of the peace agreement of July 13-15 it is hoped that a united youth movement will soon be reestablished.

Organizational Conflicts

From the intellectual conflict there naturally arose conflicts between the national, state and local organizations and the youth movement, centering for the most part around the State of New York. Since its organization in 1901, the Party had been based upon the conception of "State autonomy." That is to say, the state organizations have always enjoyed the exclusive jurisdiction with regard to problems concerning affiliation, propaganda, election campaigns, etc. This form of organization flowed from the experience undergone with the Socialist Labor Party, which had centralized all power in the hands of the National Executive Committee, which abused arbitrarily this power in order to crush all opposition to its decisions by the expulsions of members, of sections and of State organizations.

The jurisdictional decisions adopted during the conflict between the local and State organizations have been too numerous and too complicated for an attempt to discuss them here. The result of it was accusations and counter-accusations of bad faith and of illegal or arbitrary actions, the essential point of this form of controversy being constituted by the power attributed to the State organizations and to the National Executive Committee. Here, however, it was above all the veteran members of the Party who defended the powers of the State organizations, whereas the new members gave their assent to the powers demanded by the National Executive Committee.

Summary

In summarizing the situation in the United States, it can be said that the conflicts in the Socialist Party are due essentially to a new movement arising out of the world crisis with all the abnormal phenomena which it involves. (1) **The War.** The youth are so obsessed with fears of a new world war that they want to put an end to the anguish of these apprehensions. Hence, the attraction that any pseudo-revolutionary program holds for them. (2) **The Crisis.** For five years millions of young people have been unable to find employment and this has led to a morbid psychology of vengeance against capitalist society which hardly promotes intelligent reflection. (3) **Russia.** Premature reactions toward the Five Year Plan and the tremendous Communist propaganda on the "seizure of power" have influenced the opinions of new members to a certain degree. (4) **The European Defeats.** The defeats of the working class in Germany and in Austria and the reverses suffered by our Spanish comrades foster the point of view that the blame for them devolves upon the organizations and the programs of the Socialist and Labor parties of the world, and that they must be completely reorganized. They consider that the veterans are incapable of doing it and that this task falls to the youth. (5) **Fascism.** They

have a morbid fear of fascism and in general they believe that its rise in Europe could have been prevented if the youth with its vigor, its enthusiasm and its clearer views upon social and economic forces had been invested with the leadership.

Many of these new elements did not come from proletarian families, but from the liberal professions and the petty-bourgeoisie, above all from the colleges, the theological schools and the universities. They constitute a raw material which a workers party does not find it easy to assimilate because they bring with them the ideologies of their class. The hope of the Socialist Party rests in bringing into the movement an increasing number of men and women coming from the working class, above all workers who have been educated by the trades unions. They will have a stabilizing influence on the Party and will guarantee it a strong proletarian base.

The agreement which I am enclosing to you is the first step accomplished towards this stabilization. The veteran comrades have displayed tolerance and patience in their efforts to avert a fatal split. However, they have not shown themselves inclined to conclude any compromises with certain ideas and certain programs which would be just as fatal to the Socialist movement of the United States. It is our duty, not only to the working class of the United States, but to the International, to maintain a healthy party of the working masses free from all utopian ideas and rejecting dangerous adventures, a party based upon the interests of the proletariat class and not upon emotional reactions and fears. We have good reason to hope that the Party has now accomplished a turn in the sense of such a movement and that our comrades will do all that is possible to bring peace and unity into its ranks.

I should like to insist strongly on the fact that all those who are concurrently called the "Old guard" have not for a single moment projected or desired a split in the Party. We have openly exercised our rights to discuss the principles and the policy which were the cause of the disagreements in the movement, and in the states and the cities where our point of view carried we have, naturally, by the regular Party methods, fought the tendencies which, in our opinion, threatened to isolate us from the organized labor movement, to obscure the differences between Socialism and Communism, and to undermine the faith of the young generations in democratic and peaceful methods of labor action. That has been the case notably in New York.

The danger of a split became generally imminent during the first half of this year when the so-called "militants" confident in the majority they believed they had in the National Executive Committee, demanded of this organ to "reorganize" the New York movement—that is, to expel all the members and to readmit only those who were in agreement with them or who promised to obey their orders. Obviously, if this threat had been carried out the expelled majority would not have been disorganized and would not have disappeared from political life. The demand for this categorical measure becoming more and more violent, it nevertheless appeared quite obvious that the majorities of certain states and strong minorities of others could not tolerate such an expulsion en masse and the "reorganization" proposed for New York would have produced a split of the Party on a national scale. When the National Executive Committee met on July 13-15, it appeared that among its members only three out of eleven were determined to vote for the expulsion en masse of the New York Socialists. The New York Committee was then invited to confer with the representatives of the national organ, and an agreement was worked out which was ratified by two-thirds of the votes of the National Executive Committee and unanimously by the New York Committee.

We may hope that this agreement will lead to the reestablishment of a spirit of good feeling in the ranks of the Party, to the dissolution of organized groups and factions, will permit the elimination of practices which have up to now caused needless friction, and will thus put us in a position to work together actively to build the Party and to propagate its ideas while discussing as comrades the differences in theory and in tactics.

The American movement has always been a very weak link of the International and we are fully conscious that it is our duty and that upon us devolves the responsibility towards the comrades of all countries to build up in the United States a strong Party, a party which will be able to contribute to the struggles of the masses of all countries and which will fulfill its duty in every crisis that may confront the working class here or abroad.

Fraternally yours,
(Signed) JAMES O'NEAL.

PAUL LUTTINGER, M.D.
DANIEL LUTTINGER, M.D.
5 Washington Square North
1-2 and 6-8 Except Sundays
and Holidays.

France Faces The Crisis

Labor Displays Its Readiness To Battle Against The Regime But Socialists and Stalinists Sabotage Struggle

By H. FRANK ROBERTS

France is today pregnant with change. The imminence of imperialist war and the exceedingly acute growth of internal contradictions are hastening the convulsions which will exert a decisive influence upon the march of events in Europe and in Africa. The government of Laval-Herriot is a stop-gap. It cannot for much longer maintain its precarious balance between class forces moving toward decisive conflicts. It seems to be generally expected that the Laval cabinet will give way either to a cabinet of the extreme Right which will base itself not on a parliamentary majority but directly upon the Croix de Fen and other Fascist groupings, or a Radical government headed by Daladier and supported by his allies in the Front Populaire, the Socialist and Stalinist parties. A government supported by or including de la Rocque, which may take power, if need be, with the help of a coup d'etat engineered by the General Staff, would mean the launching of an immediate intensified offensive against the organizations of the French proletariat. A government of Daladier, loyally supported by Blum, Cachin & Co., would be a further step in the gross and staggering betrayal of the French workers inherent in the Front Populaire. If French finance capital entrusts the direction of its government to a so-called "Left coalition," it will be because it can count on that betrayal. The Front Populaire promises not revolution but "civil peace." It stands committed not to revolutionary defeatism in the event of war but to the support of the French bourgeoisie in the holy war against German Fascism.

The events last month at Brest and Toulon showed that the French workers want to fight for their bread and that to carry it through they are prepared to wage and win the struggle for power. But the Front Populaire desires not struggle but civil peace. Listen to Jacques Duclos in an article headed "A Government of Truce? Yes!" (L'Humanite, Aug. 23, 1935): "The (Laval) Government is heading for battles between Frenchmen at a time when we must concern ourselves with giving work to the unemployed and stimulating national economy. We certainly want a government of truce which will not marshal the workers in uniform against the workers in the factories and offices. We certainly want a government of truce which will unite all Frenchmen in defense of their bread against the two hun-

dred families which pillage the country. . . . But, to realize the union of France working under the aegis of a government of truce, we must have an end to the policy of the government of national disunity. And the Communist party, declaring itself ready to support a government of the Left, demonstrates its concern for national recovery and for a real truce." (My emphasis—R.)

This, today, is the language of the "revolutionary vanguard" of the French proletariat! Not "battles between Frenchmen" but the "union of France," the unity of "all Frenchmen"! Not the struggle for power, but "national recovery" and an end to "national disunity"!

In the name of national unity, the French Stalinists have embraced as their own the Tricolor standard of the French Republic, the flag of the French bourgeoisie, red with the blood of the workers of 1848, 1871, 1914-18 and of 1935. When the preparations for the parade of July 14 were being discussed by a joint Radical-Socialist-Stalinist committee, the Radicals indicated their desire to carry the Tricolor. The Stalinists readily assented. But, added the Radical delegate, our party is weak here in Paris and our flag display will seem puny next to the combined forces of the S.P. and C.F.I. Whereupon the Stalinist delegate voluntarily offered the services of the C. P. sections in the parade as carriers of the Tricolor—if the Radicals would be good enough to provide the flags! And so it was done.

On July 14 Paris was treated to the spectacle of communists on the march, with the Tricolor side by side with the Red flag at their head, singing the Marseillaise! And at the head of the parade was Daladier, denounced not so long ago by L'Humanite as the murderer and assassin of February 6 and whom now they call to power! "We do not abandon to the enemy the Tricolor flag of the Revolution," said Marcel Thorez in a speech before the Seventh World Congress of the Comintern, "We do not abandon the Marseillaise, song of the soldiers of the Convention." (L'Humanite, Aug. 5, 1935). Was it so long ago that the Communist International proclaimed for the Chinese revolution: "We will not abandon the blue banner of the Kuomintang to the enemy"? The tragic betrayal of the Chinese workers marshalled by the Comintern behind the blue banner of Chiang Kai-shek will now be repeated, if the Comintern has its way, for the French workers, marshalled behind the Tricolor standard of the French bourgeoisie.

Another incident of the July 14 demonstration reveals the extent to which the Stalinists have carried their capitulation to the Radicals—i.e., to the French bourgeoisie. The socialist section of the 20th ward carried a banner which read: "Down with the Decrees of Laval-Herriot!" The Stalinist leader of the same district rushed over in a rage just as the parade was starting and ripped away the name of Herriot! Herriot is in the government and stands responsible for the starvation decrees of Laval—but he is a Radical and therefore not to be offended!

The fierce clashes at Toulon and Brest the first week in August—when workers trying to defend their livelihood came into bloody conflict with the armed forces of the state—brought forth from the organs of the Front Populaire—the charge of provocation! It was to be expected that the organs of French capitalism, like Le Petit Parisien and Le Matin would refer to the demonstrators as "rabble." But what could workers have thought who read in Populaire, the Socialist organ, that "human scum" were responsible for the demonstrations, and in L'Humanite that the Toulon and Brest events were due to "persons living on the fringes of labor" carrying out as "provocateurs" their "Job as incendiaries"! These scum, rages Vaillant-Couturier, the Stalinist No. 1 Publicist, "outraged the Tricolor flag which the workers put at the head of their processions, next to the Red flag, on July 14!"

And as a political conclusion from the Toulon events, the French Stalinist party issued special instructions to watch out for provocateurs who are trying to incite the workers to outward acts!

In all France only one revolutionary organization is fighting hard and courageously to block the path of treachery down which the Front Populaire is leading the working class. That organization is the Bolshevik-Leninist group of the Socialist party which alone in France today is upholding the banner of Lenin and Liebknecht for revolutionary defeatism in the event of war, which alone is calling for the armed mobilization of the working class in the fight against Fascism and which when the crisis breaks will alone be capable of providing the revolutionary point of polarization to which the workers, betrayed by the Second and Third Internationals, will be able to turn. The Bolshevik-Leninists of France are carrying on the struggle for the Fourth International against terrific odds but with incomparable courage.

"Militant" Confab Proves A Failure

(Continued from Page 1)

sessions with a multitude of platform speakers, leaving very little time for discussion from the floor. The little time there was for discussion was limited to five minutes per speaker. Thus little clarification could result from the "Institute." Even one of the "Militants," Frank Trager of Baltimore, denounced the arrangements of the conference, during the session on the Labor Party, and demanded that arrangements be made for a serious discussion of this point. An extra hour was given to the Labor party question, out of which resulted the only arrangement for additional discussion; Paul Porter and J. N. Thurber being authorized to hold a conference on this question preceding the A. F. of L. convention.

The first session, "The Road to Socialism," was given over to two main speakers, David Berenberg, who is essentially a Right winger, and David Felix, who is typical of the Right-Contrist contemptuous of "theory." The short hour's discussion that followed saw a number of Yipsels come out for the dictatorship of the proletariat, while Zam, ex-Lovestonite, declared against including this fundamental concept in the theoretical program.

The second session was largely given over to a meandering speech by Norman Thomas on the "Practical Problems of the Party." Frank Trager also spoke on the agricultural situation, taking an empirical approach with no hint of the problem of a proletarian strategy toward the diverse elements who constitute "agriculture."

The third session, on the Labor Party, was occupied mainly with speeches by Paul Porter and minor trade union functionaries, merely giving pictures of the various situations in the trade union movement. There was no time for discussion. Frank Trager at this point denounced the arrangements which prevented discussion.

Fascist Leads War Discussion

The fourth and final session on "War and Fascism" was given over to a paper by the pacifist, Devere

Allen, and to speeches by Amicus Most, Mary Fox and Ernest Erber. Most denounced Allen's paper as "sloppy thinking" but himself took the same pacifist line of "stopping war." Mary Fox expressed the general desire of the "Militants," who desire a Socialist "American League Against War and Fascism," merely objecting to the present League because it is Stalinist-controlled and not because of its pacifist program. Fox, however, was very pessimistic, describing the sabotaging by the Right wing and the labor fakery of any attempt to build on the basis of the unions. Erber, newly elected chairman of the Yipsels, was the only speaker who came near to a Leninist line on the war question.

Albert Goldman was the first speaker in the discussion, criticizing the pacifism of the "Militants," and introduced a series of points, which were referred to an editorial committee. He was strongly supported by Francis Henson, secretary of the Revolutionary Policy Publishing Association. David Felix, speaking on Goldman's proposal said: "Here is a man who comes from a group (Trotskyists) who have long discussed this problem. We're children on this. It's like good whiskey. We want it once in a while, but we're not really ready for it."

All proposals went back to the editorial committee, since the proposed "Militant" program was not officially adopted.

Program Ambiguous

The program, written by the ex-Lovestonites, Zam and Becker, on behalf of the top caucus of the "Militants," deserves the sharpest criticism. It is highly ambiguous on the fundamental questions of the proletarian revolution, envisioning a working class government arising only out of the defense against Fascism rather than as an offensive movement, giving no hint of the nature of the civil war attending the conquest of power, and slurring over completely the proletarian dictatorship as the period of transition from capitalism to socialism. It does not even declare for socializa-

tion of industry without compensation to capitalists! It is thoroughly pacifist on the war question, saying nothing about transformation of imperialist war into civil war. Its analysis of American capitalism has no section on the farmers, but incidental references show it to conceive, in typical social democratic style, of the farmers as a homogeneous class. In Lovestonite fashion, it goes even further than "most Militants," and calls not for a Labor party, which would be bad enough, but for a Farmer-Labor party. To cap it all the trade union section contains not a whit of criticism of the trade union bureaucracy. In succeeding issues of the NEW MILITANT this Centrist program will receive the extended criticism it merits.

The Revolutionary Policy Publishing Association, whose newly re-elected secretary, Francis Henson, at the last "Institute" session affirmed the desire of his group for unity with the "Militants" on the basis of a revolutionary program, held a conference in New York on August 23-25, with representatives present from Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Tennessee, Buffalo and New York City.

The conference adopted the general line of a document, which will be published in the next issue of the Revolutionary Socialist Review, which among other things criticizes the "principle deviations" of the Communist International on the war question and the class struggle, repudiates national defense, and declares against any type of coalition government. Other documents were adopted which will shortly be analyzed in the NEW MILITANT.

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