

Browder's Complete Turn About-Face On LaGuardia Election

By James Casey

Opportunism, when put into practice, plagues a political organization like a malignant cancerous growth. Once it sets in, principles and theories are revised, defiled and, finally, repudiated amid a hurricane of wild rationalizations. A process of ideological degeneration, disintegration and chaos ensues. The metamorphosis does not present a pretty picture. It is in this stage that Stalinism now finds itself.

Every day provides new evidence of the steady decay and decline of Stalinism, the world over.

Decay of Stalinism

In the Soviet Union, workers are still being executed by the score, while other thousands are being thrown into prison or sent into exile. The regime is warning workers, still unmarked by G.P.U. agents to distrust one another, their neighbors, friends and families—all in a ruthless effort to smash the sharpening political opposition. And the workers fighting the bureaucracy are remaining away from factories, in silent strikes. The whole national economy is shaking under the terror of Stalin's reign.

In Spain, militant workers are being shot down by Stalin's agents, while the Kremlin is directing a sell-out of the nation's toilers to the imperialists of Europe.

In England, the Stalinists are mingling their nationalist cries for war with the singing of "God Save the King."

Here, in America, Earl Browder, the party's general secretary, assures a Massachusetts Inquiry Commission on Fascism and Communism that the Communist Party is opposed to "subversive elements" in "our country", that it is a staunch upholder of "our constitution" and that he (Browder) is ready to take up arms "for our government" in a war on fascism.

The speed at which Stalinism is racing to the right, joining reaction in all its crusades for the vested interests and against the workers, is clearly illustrated in the current election campaign. Stalinist leaders, who less than three years ago denounced Fiorello H. LaGuardia as "an unprincipled demagogue and a tool of Wall Street" are now passionately instructing Communist Party members to cast their vote for the "Little Flower".

On LaGuardia in 1934

In 1934, the Communist Party in its election platform gave a detailed political estimate of LaGuardia. Here are the exact words on the Republican-Stalinist candidate of 1937, as printed in the Communist Party election platform of 1934:

"LaGuardia promised the workers the right to strike. His record is: injunction, police terror, jail, strike breaking. He promised the right to organize. His record is: schemes to place all unions under police control—the training of a special rifle and machine gun regiment against workers.

"LaGuardia promise cash relief for all unemployed—but he feeds the unemployed with police clubs, jail, brutal terror and conspiracies for the murder of demonstration workers. He cuts relief, throws thousands of relief workers into the streets to

starve. He promised to clear the slums, but fires in condemned tenements reap an ever richer harvest of workers' lives.

"He promised to protect the salaries of teachers and city employees: his record is: salary cuts, firings of city employees, ruthless driving down of the living standards of white-collared and professional people.

"Fusion LaGuardia promised abolition of disease-breeding slums. Instead, he practises: vile discrimination, brutal police oppression and hastily frame-ups of Negro workers. Exorbitant rents, segregation, discrimination on jobs and relief, unheard of suffering for the Negroes are the results of LaGuardia's promises.

"Hundreds of thousands of young unemployed workers are discriminated against; get no relief, are without future, without a chance to find employment. Tens of thousands of women workers are miserably exploited and speeded-up. Thousands of unemployed girls are homeless; fill the flop houses; sleep in subways. Single unemployed women are denied relief.

"Democratic Governor Lehman and the Republican State Legislature helped LaGuardia put through his "economy" (hunger) program. Governor Lehman himself negotiated the city-bankers agreement that mortgages to the bankers the relief of the unemployed, the salaries of civil employees and the living standards of the working population.

"Fusion LaGuardia and Democratic Lehman both serve the same masters. Both worship the same God—the bankers agreement. They both follow the same program—the program of plundering the people in the interests and profits of the Chase National Bank and the National City Bank."

So there you have it right out of their own mouths.

Why Front Changed

What explanation, one may reasonably ask, do the Stalinist leaders offer for their flagrant change of front—a change that outdoes in downright duplicity and shamelessness any shift ever executed by any political organization in the annals of American history. The answer is that they offer interminable explanations, but only one of these is politically understandable.

First, the Stalinist leaders say that they support not LaGuardia, but the Labor Party in order to build the labor movement.

They, then say, their position is made necessary as part of the drive to "defeat Tammany" and "keep Reaction out of City Hall." (And this, mark you, after shouting that LaGuardia kept Reaction in City Hall.)

They also say that by uniting with "all the progressive forces" they help to build their own party, and so on and so on.

Finally, as a sort of summation, the Stalinist leaders argue that the campaign is one for the "furtherance of democracy" and that the same campaigns "for democracy" are being waged by the Communist Party in every city and State in the land. In this last argument lies the key to the whole Stalinist program, the answer to the party's political and ideological bankruptcy as a working class organization.

The C.P. is fighting "for Democracy." So declares Browder and his statement is echoed by Amter and their underlings. They are fighting for the maintenance and therefore, the prolongation of democracy. But what kind of democracy? The prevailing "democracy", of course—capitalist "democracy". Just what does this entail?

It means that the Communist Party must initiate, promote and aid campaigns of narrow nationalism, wave the flag (Ku Klux Klan fashion) and defend the existing order "at all costs." More than that, since the motivating force behind the Stalinist line is the maintenance of capitalist democracy, the Communist Party must relentlessly fight militant workers, revolutionary activity and revolutionary working class organizations. And to conceal their sinister aims, the Stalinist leaders prattle about seeking "to bring about Socialism through legal means."

Lenin's Warnings

Lenin lashed out against this sort of treachery time and again. Excoriating the machinations of opportunists, Lenin in his "State and Revolution" (p. 19) wrote:

"When Marxism is adulterated it becomes opportunism, the substitution of eclecticism for dialectics is the best method of deceiving the masses; it gives an illusory satisfaction; it seems to take into account all sides of the process, all the tendencies of development, all the contradictory factors and so forth, whereas in reality it offers no consistent and revolutionary view of social development at all."

Lenin also flays the sophistry of "achieving Socialism through legal means." In the same work (p. 17) he describes the State as a "special repressive force."

"It follows from this," Lenin wrote, "that the special repressive force of the bourgeoisie for the suppression of the proletariat, of the millions of workers by the handful of rich, must be replaced by a special repressive force of the proletariat for the suppression of the bourgeoisie (the dictatorship of the proletariat). It is just this that constitute the destruction of the "state as a state." It is just this that constitute the act of the seizure of the means of production in the name of society." (emphasis J. C.)

Capitalist Agents

Having embarked on their new opportunistic and narrow nationalist line, there is no limit to how far their betrayals of the working class may extend. In the circumstances, it is easy for Phil Frankfeld, secretary of the Communist Party of New England, to tell the already mentioned Massachusetts commission that

What's Going on in N. Y. Election Campaign

Amid the blaring of "Giovinezza," the Fascist hymn, shouts of "Fascisti" and upraised arms in Fascist salute, LaGuardia, chief of the People's Front, New York section, addressed a mass demonstration in Columbus Circle on October 12. The meeting, called ostensibly to celebrate Columbus Day, was soon turned into a demonstration for Mussolini and Italian Fascism. A few hours later, LaGuardia again spoke at the same place, this time, however, at a "non-Fascist" meeting. Militant anti-Fascist workers thus got a fine taste of the People's Front in action.

The extent of the S.P.'s great stride to the right is indicated by the fact that Paul Blanshard, Commissioner of Accounts in LaGuardia's cabinet, has joined the Independent Committee for Harry W. Laidler, running for City Council. Blanshard's desertion of the S.P. back in 1934 was denounced at the time by all S.P. members, including Laidler, as a betrayal. Now Blanshard is rooting for Laidler. Blanshard's political position hasn't changed one whit since he deserted the banner of Socialism, but apparently Laidler has.

Thanks to the Stalinist leadership of the Workers Alliance, the unemployed demonstration at City Hall last Saturday was turned into LaGuardia campaign rally. The chief demand of the demonstrators was for increased relief to meet the rising cost of living. It did not occur to the Stalinist leadership, however, to demand the repeal of the Sales Tax, which LaGuardia saddled on the workers of New York, as a means of easing the burdens of the unemployed. When some WAA members raised the slogan, "Down with the Sales Tax," they were actually threatened. Oh yes,

the "subversive elements" seeking to destroy "our government" are the Trotskyists. Thus the Stalinist leaders not only glorify nationalism, they emerge in the open as spies of the constituted authorities against the working class.

By the same token, Browder not only heaps praise upon Roosevelt for his war speech in Chicago, but he declares in the Daily Worker that the Communist Party is entirely in accord with the Administration's line as enunciated by the President. With this brotherly gesture, Browder again lets the cat slip out of the bag.

Not the Marxist-Leninist line for the Communists—but the line of the Administration, of capitalist "democracy," of the Wall Street oligarchy.

It is the task of revolutionary socialists, especially in the present write-in campaign for James P. Cannon, mercilessly to expose Stalinism, with its People's Frontists line of class-collaboration, social chauvinism, jingoism, and its violent struggle against revolutionary working class unity and Socialism. Particularly must these streamlined nationalists be unmasked in the trade unions. In the furtherance of this work, the revolutionary Socialist must rally the workers for the building of a strong unified and active revolutionary Marxist Party in America.

when the delegation went in to see the Mayor, he wasn't in.

A new slant on the housing problem in New York was given by Stanley Isaacs, ALP candidate for Borough President of Manhattan. After studying the question thoroughly he came to the conclusion that, "I do not think that anything can be more harmful to real estate interests than the development of slum conditions and widespread decay spreading over broad areas in this community."

The new high in frankness, however, belongs to Mahoney. In a speech which moved the workers of New York to tears, he said, "A lot of people point with suspicion at Wall Street. That's so wrong and unjust. There is not a more honorable set of men and women in the city. I feel it the duty of an administration to find out what are the troubles down in Wall Street and how we can help them. An administration should have a sympathetic interest in all business in the city. If there is poverty (!) in Wall Street, it hurts all the city, it hurts the State and it hurts the entire country."

"What is Fusion? The Republican and the new Fusion Parties serve the same masters as Tammany Hall. They represent the same interests: the bankers and trusts, the interests of the capitalist system as a whole. The whole Fusion campaign is but a 'new' deal between the Republican and Democrat capitalist politicians (to be gained from robbing and starving the people). Who are the men behind Fusion? Fiorello H. LaGuardia, several times decorated by Mussolini for his faithful services to the Fascist butchers of the Italian workers, is one of the most dangerous agents of the finance kings. With Tammany more and more discredited, and the Republicans having little chance in New York, LaGuardia is brought forward as 'a man of the people' Behind the smoke screen of demagoguery and promises, LaGuardia and Fusion are committed to the same program as Tammany Hall, the plundering of the poor, the breaking of strikes, starving the unemployed, and maintaining the profits of the same handful of bankers at the expense of the welfare of the workers and their families." (Election Platform, Communist Party, 1933).

Governor Lehman and President Roosevelt, the white haired boys of the ALP last year, are supporting the ALP's Enemy Number One, Mahoney. And Senator Wagner, the ALP's great labor hero, is also stumping for Tammany's candidate by speaking at a rally of the Trades Union Party, set up by Tammany as a "Labor Party" in opposition to the ALP. Is the ALP sore!

The revolutionary socialist campaign will wind up next week with a series of section rallies dotting the map of New York at which James P. Cannon, S.P. (left wing) candidate for mayor, Max Shachtman, Maurice Spector, James Burnham and others will put forth the position of the revolutionary socialists in the campaign.