

The Slogan of Workers' and Farmers' Government

By JOHN PEPPER

The enlarged session of the Communist International which met in June in Moscow has issued a new slogan for the Communist parties of the world—the slogan of the workers' and farmers' government. The Communist International has by this means placed the old slogan of workers' government upon a broader social basis.

The new slogan of the Communist International is no new slogan for Party in the United States.

Comrade Zinoviev declared at the session of the enlarged executive: "Our American Party, the Workers' Party, has already of its own accord found the slogan of workers' and farmers' government." The Workers' Party of America was the first party within the Communist International to apply the new slogan theoretically as well as practically.

The Theoretical Formulation

Theoretically, the problem was first brought up in my Labor Party pamphlet. There I said the following concerning the alliance of farmers and workers: "A Labor Party will grow provided it does not attempt to be a party for over everybody, but rather a class party of the working class. This should not mean that the Labor Party shall fail to include the working farmers, that is, the tenant farmers and mortgage farmers. Such omission would be a mistake of the most pitiful kind, the standpoints of the future of the working class. One of the most important conditions for the victory of a Labor Party is that it develop the cooperation of the farmers and workers, which has become traditional in America. America is a favorable exception in this respect. Of European countries such collaboration takes place only in Soviet Russia. In the former third parties (Greenback Party, People's Party) the political leadership was in the hands of the farmers, the workers being merely an unconscious appendage. If a Labor Party is to be born and to grow, the relation must be reversed."

I then brought up the question, upon a broader basis, in my pamphlet "Underground Radicalism," in the section, "Can We Utilize the Conflicts Within Capitalist Society?" I wrote in this pamphlet: "There are Communists who believe that we lose our revolutionary virginity when we take advantage of the class-divisions within the bourgeoisie. They believe that the only way to wage a class war is to confront the workers and farmers' government with the slogan of workers' and farmers' government.

the class-struggle, is to consider capitalist society as one solid reactionary camp which always confronts the workers in closed phalanxes. But this is pure nonsense, and not revolutionary. Marxist Communists have always held that the class-divisions and conflicts within capitalist society must be used to the best advantage of the working class.

"Ferdinand Lassalle, the famous German Socialist, once said that the bourgeoisie is a single reactionary mass. But it was Karl Marx who protested and polemized against this unscientific and superficial assertion. It was Karl Marx who pointed out in 'Capital' that the utilization of the class struggle between industrial capital and big land owners in the Forties, procured the important symbolic concession of the ten-hour day for the English workers.

From Marx to Lenin, every real Marxist has practiced the tactic of analyzing the various class-divisions within capitalist society, and exploiting the class-conflicts within the ruling class, for the benefit of the working class. The tactics of Lenin during the entire Russian revolution, is a masterly application of this tactic. The whole Russian revolution from the internal political point of view, is but a proletarian utilization of the class-conflicts between the peasants on the one hand, and the big landowners and big capitalists on the other. Lenin's tactic will alliance of workers with poor peasants, neutralization of the wealthy peasants, struggle against the big landowners and capitalists.

The main difference between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks was exactly this question of the utilization of the conflicts among the various classes. The Mensheviks claimed: "It is a middle-class revolution, and therefore the working class should ally itself with the capitalists against the feudal landowners." The Bolsheviks said: "This is a proletarian revolution, and therefore the right tactic is an alliance between workers and peasants against big capital and big land owners."

Then, on the basis of this theoretical deliberation, the Agrarian Program of our Party set forth openly the slogan of workers' and farmers' government.

The New Slogan Before the Farmers

In practical agitation, the slogan of workers' and farmers' government was first applied in the St. Joseph trial against Foster. The Communists as the representatives of the working

class-trial. In summing up the trial, I wrote them as follows in "The Worker" of April 14: "From every point of view the trial is a historical symbol. Foster, as the representative of the American militant workers, appears before the capitalist jurisdiction as a farmer, jury, and verdict of his class. He is condemned before us the three most important classes of American society—the worker, the capitalist, and the farmer. The worker is the defendant; the capitalist is the prosecutor; and the farmer will give the verdict. A historical symbol truly reflecting the historical situation! The working masses march on as the active forces of the revolution. The capitalists oppress these masses even more fiercely than its governmental powers of suppression. And the victory in this ever sharpening class conflict will go to that class which receives the support of the farmers." The Central Executive Committee of our Party took up this question and decided that the whole defense was to be based mainly upon the common interests of workers and the exploited farmers. In the Foster trial, C. E. Rutherford, with masterly clearness and a popular manner that was incomparable, presented the slogan of farmers' and workers' government before the farmer jury, and thereby, also to the public at large.

The July 3d Convention of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party with a second and greater opportunity to identify itself with the demands of the exploited farmers (even at the expense of Marxian clearness), whereby the slogan of workers' and farmers' government was turned, from the slogan of the Workers Party, into the slogan of the great masses of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party.

Revolt of American Farmers

Of course, the chief motive has been mainly the social and political development of the United States itself. We could not realize that a portion of the labor aristocracy and most of the high officials of the trade unions are hopeless for the cause of the revolution, having definitely allied themselves with the capitalists. At the same time we saw that the exploited tenant and mortgage farmers were revolting with ever growing bitterness, against the capitalist and the capitalist government. The situation today is such in the United States, that the capitalists and the old capitalist parties fear

the action of the working class which is split up into so many divisions and led by so many reactionary leaders. We have seen that all three party movements in the past became mass parties only when, in addition to the urban elements, the lower middle class and workers, were joined by the rebellion of the farmers.

Lessons of European Revolutions
But apart from the development in America, the lessons of European revolutions have convinced us that the support of the farmers is necessary, in order to achieve the victory of the proletarian revolution and to maintain the power of the laboring masses.

History shows us that all revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have received the initiation from the cities. The French Revolution and the revolution of 1848

France, Germany, and Hungary, were led by the urban middle class. The leading class in the proletarian revolution in 1917 in Russia and in 1919 in Hungary was that of the urban workers. Since the birth of capitalist society, those revolutions have always been led by one or the other of those two powerful classes of modern society which are created by capitalism itself—the capitalists or workers. But history shows us that only revolution, which understood how to make an alliance with the farmers, could achieve victory or maintain the revolutionary class a long time in power. The great French Revolution was victorious, and could wage war for years against all of feudal Europe, because the French bourgeoisie freed the peasants and gave them the land of the feudal aristocracy and the church. The German revolution of 1848 failed miserably because the cowardly German middle class did not dare to free the German spirs. When the Hapsburgs dispersed the Frankfurt national assembly with bayonets, not one hand was raised to defend the revolution. But on the other hand, the Hungarian revolution of 1848 could maintain itself for years and conduct a victorious war against the Hapsburgs because Ludwig Kossuth, with revolutionary instinct, won the peasants over to the revolution and gave them land and freedom. The great proletarian revolution of 1917

in Russia is the achievement of the working class, but the proletarian would have lost power ten times over, and could not have waged revolutionary war on fourteen fronts for years, if it had not given land and freedom to the Russian peasants. It

ought not be forgotten that the Com- the exploited farmers.

mass workers of red Petrograd and the genius of Trotsky organized the Red Army, but that four-fifths of the masses of the Red Army consists of peasants who defended their newly acquired land against Czarism and counter-revolution. On the other hand, the Hungarian proletarian revolution of 1919 failed four and a half months because its leaders had not understood how to secure the alliance of peasants with the city. They carried out the "theoretically correct" socialization of land, instead of giving the land to the peasants, as was Lenin's policy in Russia. Thereby, they made the social basis for the Hungarian revolution too narrow for it to be able to live and be victorious.

The history of revolutions teaches us that the revolutionary class must be able to bring together all discontented classes under its leadership. It must understand this under the penalty of death for the revolution; otherwise it drives the other classes into the arms of the counter revolution. The revolutionary peasant soldiers of Napoleon, Kossuth and Trotsky fought against the counter-revolution, while the Frankfurt assembly in 1848 and the Hungarian proletarian dictatorship of 1919 were overthrown by the counter-revolutionary peasant soldiers of Hapsburg and Horthy.

The Working Class Must Lead

The farmers, even when they are discontented and rebellious, could never play an independent political role, and could never rule independently. The history of the Great German Peasants' Revolt of the sixteenth century shows this just as clearly as does the history of the peasant government of Stamboliisk in Bulgaria in the twentieth century. Only centralized classes, that is only the capitalist class or the working class can seize or hold the centralized government for a long time.

The capitalist class has become counter revolutionary everywhere throughout the world. The only class which is revolutionary today, is the working class. Only the initiative of the working class can overthrow capitalism. The exploited farmers must realize that they can free themselves from capitalism only when they ally themselves with the workers. But on the other hand, the workers must realize that they can win only if they place themselves at the head of the farmers, and that they can retain power only if they know how to secure the alliance of the