

# SOCIALIST APPEAL

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## THE ELECTIONS IN 1936

IT FOLLOWS from a Marxian analysis that revolutionary politics is utterly different in KIND from all other politics. Its aim is not to "improve conditions" or gain reforms or stop corruption or accomplish any other end within the framework of existing society; nor does it aim to win a parliamentary majority in "the government." Its aim, the expression of the interests of the revolutionary class, is quite precisely to overthrow existing social relations, to smash the existing state, to found a new state that will superintend the task of establishing a new society.

Politics of all other sorts revolve within the framework of the existing order. Non-revolutionary political parties, contending for votes and office, represent different sections of the ruling class struggling for the major share of profits and privilege, different groups seeking the lucrative control of the governmental bureaucracy, different theories of how best to maintain the existing order and keep for it the support or tolerance of the masses, different organized attempts to secure this or that reform or concession for this or that section of the population. But all varieties of non-revolutionary politics PRESUPPOSE the continuance of the existing order in its fundamental structure: that is to say in capitalist society, non-revolutionary politics presupposes capitalist property relations, the exploitation of the masses by the propertied minority, the class domination of the bourgeoisie, the maintenance of the bourgeois state.

### Working Class Politics in Early Period of Capitalism

During the period of the advance of capitalism, when the bourgeoisie, playing a progressive historical role, engineered the vast expansion of the means of production and brought mankind as a whole to hitherto unheard of material levels, the DIFFERENCES in bourgeois politics were of genuine concern to the working class and to the masses generally. It was the class-conscious sections of the bourgeoisie that led the revolutionary struggle to smash the fetters of feudalism and of chattel slavery, that broke through the restrictions which held back the development of modern industrial production. All this had to be accomplished before the working class could itself play an independent role. Furthermore, while capitalism was advancing, it was to the interest of the working class to side with the sections of the bourgeoisie which fought against clericalism, for certain democratic rights, for mass education, etc. The "independent" function of the working class was confined to striving to win for itself as large as possible a share in the profits of capitalism, while throwing its weight to the more progressive section of the bourgeoisie.

Now, however, capitalism as a whole, on a world scale, is no longer a progressive but a retrogressive force. Its social relations no longer permit the further expansion of the means of production, but instead constitute an obstacle and brake to their expansion—indeed, serve to destroy them and send them backward. Capitalism is in its death throes, and offers the masses the prospect only and necessarily of continued and increasing poverty, hunger, unemployment, war, insecurity, and political tyranny. The dominant class under capitalism, therefore, has likewise become a retrogressive and reactionary class. The non-revolutionary issues, which revolve within the orbit of capitalist society, have sunk to secondary importance. The SAME general prospect—unemployment, hunger, war, fascism—follows necessarily from EVERY program which presupposes the continued existence of capitalism. This prospect can be altered only by revolutionary change, only by the overthrow of capitalism and of the power of the bourgeoisie.

The central political issue of our time is, therefore, the issue of the class struggle for workers' power and for socialism. Every other question is of altogether minor importance, since its answer can be found only in the solution of the central issue.

### Workers' Power and Socialism Central Issue

It may seem far-flung and abstract to state that this is the central issue even of the 1936 election campaign in this country. Yet, in a very real sense, this is the case. It must be remembered that the class struggle of the workers is not confined to the United States. It is an international struggle and its phase here is not the same as in, for example, the Soviet Union, where the working class holds social power, or in France, where the struggle for power now is rapidly nearing an open climax. The struggle in the United States cannot be separated from the international struggle, even though the stage reached in the U. S. is at the specific level dictated by the concrete circumstances of national development.

It must be remembered, furthermore, that a chief function of bourgeois politics is to deceive the masses as to the real and central issue which confronts them. So long as the masses believe that their significant political choices lie WITHIN the capitalist order, capitalism itself, no matter what internal shifts take place, is not threatened. Every device serves: two or more avowed capitalist parties, to stage periodic "life-and-death struggles" for "the fate of the nation"; when that sham is seen through, a Populist or Labor party to slough off mass dissatisfaction into safe channels within the limitations of the capitalist state; when all else fails, a fascist dictatorship

to maintain capitalist property with machine guns, concentration camps, and mass hysteria.

Revolutionary socialists must, however, break through the deceptions of bourgeois politics. They must push aside all secondary and reformist distinctions, and pose directly the central issue: the class struggle for workers' power and for socialism. Their success in an election campaign is not to be measured in votes or offices won, but in the extent and the depth to which they have succeeded in bringing the central issue before the consciousness of the masses.

It is in the light of such considerations as these that we must judge this and every other electoral campaign.

#### **Similarities of Parties Other Than Socialist**

Besides the Socialist party, four political parties have entered the national electoral campaign. Only two of these will figure conspicuously when the votes are counted. But the other two, the Union party and the Communist party, are also of symptomatic importance.

At first glance, these four parties seem far apart indeed. If we judge them merely from publicity releases, the speeches of their leaders, what they say about each other, we should conclude not only that they are the bitterest of mutual enemies but that each of them was marked off from all the others by basic policies, ideals, and perspectives. Marxists, however, cannot judge from the surface of things, but must penetrate beneath the covering of publicity and loose agitation down to the economic, social and political foundations. If we perform this critical task in the case of these four parties, we discover that in spite of their so considerable differences, in spite of the divergent social composition of their support, there are nevertheless certain fundamental similarities among them.

A first and significant similarity is the fact that the platforms, programs, and agitation of them all are consistently DEMAGOGIC. Demagoguery means the adaptation of policy and propaganda to the prejudices of the audience to which it is hoped to appeal, without regard to the truth or correctness or workability of the given policy and propaganda. Demagoguery is thus the exploitation of ignorance. It is in direct contrast to principled politics, which, though it naturally takes into account the psychology of its audience in determining the form and expression of its policies, nevertheless always tells the truth both about what is at present, what will probably be, and about what it proposes as solution. Principled politics, thus, instead of exploiting, combats ignorance; instead of pandering to prejudices and building on them, roots them vigorously out.

How else but as demagoguery can we understand the Republican cry for "freedom" (from the most vicious of the open-shop industrialists), for a balanced budget (from bankers and economists who know that this is impossible financially, and who besides resist every increase in taxes which might bring it closer), for individual initiative (from the initiators of mass production and the assembly line), against monopolies (from the owners of the biggest of them)? Or the Democratic championing of the rights of labor (from the party that smashed the automobile strike, killed Shoemaker, flogs the share-croppers, grows and fattens on Jim Crow), or its railing at economic tyrants and its demand for continuing the forgotten man's New Deal (from an Administration which has swelled profits a dozen times with little or no advance in real wages, which brings Chrysler the most prosperous year in its history, with more than 12,000,000 still unemployed), or for the "right of all to a living" (from the men whose policy of prosperity through scarcity guarantees that there is not enough food to go around, even if there were the means to buy it)? Or the Union party's railings about inflation and isolation (from irresponsible charlatans who would be the first to howl as prices of manufactured goods rose, and who

would most loudly call for war if the "national honor" of the bankers demanded it)? Or the mouthings of the Communist party about a People's Front against the Hearst-Landon-Liberty League reaction, about the Bill of Rights, and the union of all "liberty-loving and peace-loving" individuals (from a party whose only task is to serve the bidding of a tyrannical bureaucracy whose prison camps are more crowded with revolutionists than were at any time those of the Czar, whose chief aim is to prepare their following for support of the U. S. government in the coming war)?

The demagoguery of the four parties is not accidental. All promises of material betterment, of peace, prosperity and security, are necessarily demagogic at the present time if they are formulated within the framework of the capitalist order, since none of these is any longer possible under capitalism. That is why only a program of revolutionary struggle AGAINST capitalism can at the present time be anything other than demagoguery.

#### **Republican Party For Big Business**

But this, in turn, discloses a more basic similarity among these four parties, of which their demagoguery is the agitational expression. Each in its different way presents a program which revolves within the orbit of capitalism, which presupposes the continued existence of capitalism. It follows therefrom that each of these parties is basically dedicated, however indirectly, to the maintenance and defense of capitalism. They differ profoundly, it is true, in the ways and means they propose; in their social composition; in the manner and direction of the "appeal" which they make. But these differences drop to a second place before this basic similarity.

An examination of the special features of the parties confirms this conclusion. We find, first, that the Republican party appears, on the whole, in this campaign as the party of open, traditional reaction. It is the party supported by the majority of the big capitalists, and by considerable portions of the middle classes, who, after turning away from the Republicans in 1932 in desperate fright at the ravages of the crisis, are now looking up once more to their rejuvenated old gods, the bankers and corporation executives. The reactionary policies of the Republicans are faintly clouded by ballyhoo over the "rejuvenated Republican party," the "overthrow of the Eastern Old Guard in favor of the younger forces," by the Borah-written "anti-monopoly" plank, etc.; but the pretense is weak. The leaders make clear that what the Republicans propose is a return to the good old Coolidge days. The future of capitalism and profits, they would like to believe, lies in real Americanism, in a balanced budget, rugged individualism, competition, no government "interference" in business, no monkeyshines with labor. They are revived by the taste of the profits of the last two years; and they want to pursue still increased profits in "peace" and in their own unhampered way.

#### **Democratic Party For "Enlightened" Capitalism**

The perspectives and propaganda of the Democratic party differ widely—in words at any rate. Equally devoted to the preservation of capitalism and the fullest possible capitalist prosperity (i.e., profits), the Democratic politicians believe that the methods of rugged individualism and traditional reaction are no longer adequate either to preserve profits or to keep the tolerance of the masses for the capitalist order. They advocate an "enlightened" capitalism, tempering the harsh wind of exploitation with fine phrases about human rights and public work, the needs of the masses and New Deals and collective bargaining. In this way, Jim Farley and his colleagues aim to drug the masses with heavy-scented promises, to oil the wheels of capitalism in order to prevent too open creaking.

And through such means, combined with cleverly administered relief, farmer subsidies, and an unprecedented bureaucratic machine, the Democrats have indeed won the temporary allegiance of a substantial majority of the people. Those ungrateful masters, the big capitalists themselves, have most of them turned against the hand that led them out of the depths of the crisis, they are unwilling to sustain the extravagant machine, and are impatient at the indirect methods—the “concessions” and flattery—which Roosevelt uses to keep the masses tied to capitalism. They want all brakes off. But the masses themselves, in the majority, still follow Roosevelt, and will reelect him. Most skillfully he has incorporated the trade-union bureaucracy in his staff; and through them staves off any serious third party threat, and keeps his hold on the ranks of labor. Roosevelt in 1936 is the true American People’s Front candidate: with his politely radical program, his broadsides against war and tyranny and reactionaries and fascism, and his following of organized labor and organized farmers and advanced New Republic and Church liberals; and a true People’s Front candidate, also, in his utilization of this program and this following to serve the basic needs of American imperialism.

The Union party needs little comment. It appears suddenly as a momentary brew of U. S. Populist and farmer provincialism. Its demagogy is the most extreme and the most unrealistic of the four parties. It combines the old Greenback cry for inflation with an infantile program of U. S. isolation. It is certain that the Union party will make no serious inroads in the national campaign; and it is doubtful that its founders even intend it to do so. Lemke wants it for his own purposes in his local struggles; and Coughlin, losing his grip in any case, finds it helpful for the moment. At the most, they wish a few Congressmen from the West, to join to the inflation bloc. There is no evidence for the view that the Union party is Republican and Liberty League inspired: it should draw what votes it gets almost equally from the two major parties.

#### **Communist Party an Obstacle to Working Class**

These three parties are alike not merely in standing for the maintenance of capitalism, but in being capitalist parties in the full sense, parties of the bourgeoisie. The Communist party, of course, though it enters the election with a program solely of “immediate demands” designed within the framework of capitalism, is not itself a capitalist, but a working class party. This does not mean that the Communist party actually expresses the needs and interests of the working class—the contrary is the case—but that it is the political expression of forces within the working class. Nor does it mean that the C. P. is itself a progressive force, an aid to the working class in realizing its needs. The C. P. is just the opposite: it is, at every turn, an obstacle to the working class, a mighty weight confounding and retarding the revolutionary struggle of the workers for power and socialism. But it is an obstacle of a different kind from the capitalist parties proper.

Specifically, the Communist party, in this country as elsewhere, is the political instrument of the reactionary bureaucracy of the first workers’ state, the Soviet Union. It expresses the needs and interests of that bureaucracy. To understand the role of the C. P. in the 1936 U. S. elections, we must, therefore, understand the present needs and perspectives of the Soviet bureaucracy. Striving desperately to preserve its power and privilege in a world headed for wars and revolutions, the Soviet bureaucracy tries simultaneously to unify and strengthen its house at home by conciliating non-proletarians, liquidating proletarian oppositionists, and building up its armaments; and at the same time abroad, through both its official

diplomats and its unofficial agents, the sections of the Communist International, tries to win the support of bourgeois nations, first, for “peace”—i.e., the imperialist STATUS QUO—or, second, for military aid or at least no attack when war comes.

The Communist parties do their part through the line of the People’s Front, mechanically and rigidly imposed throughout the world: trying to build up broad, formless, classless aggregations of “peace-lovers” who will shout for “peace” while they can, and be ready to demand either benevolent neutrality or war against the “fascist aggressor” (who, presumably will be the enemy of the Soviet Union in the war) when the time comes. So, in this country, in 1936, the aim of the C. P. is directed not at all against capitalism and the bourgeoisie, but toward the extension of this People’s Front ideology as widely as possible. But, since it is Roosevelt himself who represents the closest American counterpart of the People’s Front, the C. P. in practice is led, in effect, to virtual support of Roosevelt, and to a concentration of fire against the “Hearst-Liberty League—Landon reaction.” It is still quite possible that the C. P. will withdraw its national candidates in favor of the “lesser evil.”

This outline of the positions of the four parties in the 1936 campaign enables us to answer easily enough the arguments and slogans which are used to deceive the masses as to the only genuine political issue—the issue of which class holds power—which, from the point of view of the working class, faces us in this and every other political development.

#### **Both Roosevelt and Landon Represent Reaction**

“Roosevelt or reaction!” chorus Jim Farley and John L. Lewis. As Norman Thomas so correctly pointed out in Cleveland, obeying the advice of this slogan gives us both. The difference between Landon and Roosevelt is not between what is reactionary and progressive: they BOTH are unequivocal representatives of the reactionary social class in modern society, both sworn to uphold a reactionary social order; they differ only in their versions of the most effective means for guaranteeing the success of reaction. For the worker, the choice between them is, at the most, no more important than the choice between the assembly line at Ford’s or at Chrysler’s.

“The main danger,” the Communists tell us, “is from the Hearst-Liberty League-Landon combination” and the main effort in the election must be to defeat it. Once again the same reasoning applies. The Roosevelt reaction, from a class point of view, is quite as dangerous as the Landon reaction. Indeed, if anything, it is more so, precisely for the reason that the Roosevelt reaction is overlaid with the liberal and “pro-labor” phraseology. Roosevelt is more successful in harnessing the masses to the yoke of capitalism because he more fully deceives them while doing so. Contrary to the Communist view, there is a closer foreshadowing of American fascism in the methods of Roosevelt than in the more open methods of the Republicans. Fascism, too, appears as reaction in a “radical” disguise.

So, likewise, for all the specious arguments that the “main issue” in the campaign is the “judicial tyranny” of the Supreme Court or “States’ rights” and the “encroachments of the Federal government” or “amending the Constitution” or any of a thousand others. How entirely subordinate such issues are to the basic CLASS issue, to the issue of capitalism versus socialism, is ironically illustrated by the position of the doctrine of “States’ rights” and the power of the Supreme Court. The Republican party, founded by the bourgeoisie of the Northern States, was, when it first took office in 1861, the champion of the power of the Federal government as against States’ rights; the Democratic party, as representative of the slave-holders, upheld States’ rights—which meant

resistance to domination by the capitalists of the North in control of the Federal government. The Democratic party stood by the Supreme Court, whose Dred Scott decision favored the slave-holders. The Republican party took up arms to overthrow the decision of the Supreme Court, and to maintain the power of the Federal government.

In 1936, positions are exactly reversed. It is now the Republican party that has become the defender of States' rights and of the Court. Both of the two major parties realize clearly that such matters—the form and mechanism of government—are entirely subordinate to the main question, to be utilized as most convenient by whoever controls the state machinery. All such issues are now limited to the capitalist framework. It is not the Supreme

Court or the Constitution or the Federal government or the States which are the particular enemies, but capitalism as a whole and its entire state apparatus.

No, the main issue for the working class, the only issue that is for it of profound and genuine moment, is the CLASS issue: what class holds power? The Socialist party can fulfill the role of conscious leader of the working class only to the extent that its own campaign is conducted on this basis, only to the extent that it is a class campaign for socialism. All of its propaganda, all its discussion of particular demands, must be attached to this axis. Now, more clearly than ever before, it must be the Socialist party against the field,—for power and for socialism.

## For A Labor Party

By GUS TYLER

**NOTE.** The Editorial Board is not in agreement with the views expressed by Comrade Tyler. We oppose the idea that revolutionary Socialists should take the lead in building a reformist party. But one of the functions of the Appeal is to discuss freely all the problems confronting the Socialist movement. Comrade Pemble of Minnesota has contributed an article on the same question, which will appear in the next issue. We have also asked comrade James Burnham to write on the same subject.

**T**HE question of a labor party is inherently confusing because in countries of bourgeois democracy the question: What is a party? is not a simple one.

To the Marxist, a working class party is the vanguard of the proletariat and the leader in the Socialist revolution. This means that the Socialist party gives conscious, socialist cohesiveness and direction to the often unconscious, spontaneously inchoate struggles of the masses for certain vital needs. These struggles organized and unorganized, sporadic and protracted, are conducted by trade unions, BY ELECTORAL MACHINES, by unemployed organizations, by student, middle class, and nationalist revolutionary forces. The Socialist party, without imagining that any one of these bodies, and certainly not all of them, is revolutionary in character or purpose, attempts to give form and content to the struggles of these separate bodies as TO RAISE THEIR LEVEL OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS or to imbue them with socialist purpose.

To the legalist Socialist, this entire great task of the Socialist party is narrowed down to the important, but narrowly one-sided function of conducting elections. And no matter whether the Socialist party conducts an election for reforms, or for complete Socialism, or for the immediate and unconditional surrender of the capitalist class, so long as it conceives its purpose to be primarily electoral, it is doomed to stagnate in the swamps of reformist impotence,—phrases, program, planks, demands and principles notwithstanding.

Now what is a Labor Party?

Some comrades imagine that a Labor party is synonymous with a reformist Socialist party. While it is true that a Labor party is foredoomed during its period of normal functioning to a reformist policy, one must not forget that there have been and there are reformist Socialist parties which are NOT Labor parties and are even ANTI-Labor-party.

### Labor Party an Electoral Instrument

A Labor party is a particular TYPE of party. Essentially, a Labor party is the expression of trade union consciousness when it has reached the political level. This essential feature of a Labor party is reflected both in the organizational structure and the political ideology of a

Labor party. It is not a substitute for a revolutionary party; it does not stand in contradiction to a revolutionary party. It bears the same relationship to the revolutionary party on the ELECTORAL field as do the trade unions on the industrial field. I underline "electoral," because many comrades who have a fairly clear understanding of revolutionary work in trade unions, based not on destroying the trade unions but advancing them, insist that a similar approach can not apply to a Labor party since a Labor party is a POLITICAL competitor. Such comrades, although Marxist, approach the problem from the same viewpoint as the reformists, limiting the essential task of the party to ELECTORAL work, without understanding that at certain times a revolutionary party can best conduct its work by shifting the work of ELECTIONEERING to a mass party of the workers.

I emphasize this point because some comrades of the "left" like some comrades of the "right," and for the same reason, can only think of building a Labor party in opposition to building a Socialist party, very much as some comrades in the past, and even today, speak of building the party instead of unions, or unemployed leagues, or cultural groups, or student bodies. The very heart of revolutionary mass work resides in the fact that we build the party and we build for Socialism by taking the lead and thereby giving direction to these NON-revolutionary, NON-party mass organizations of struggle. And a Labor party is just such a NON-revolutionary, non-party mass organization of struggle on the electoral front. We can build the S. P. WHILE building and THRU building a Labor party. The S. P. in such a Labor party, of course, maintains its organizational identity and independence.

### Labor Party not a People's Front

Labor parties go under various names nowadays, such as People's party, Farmer-Labor party, etc. The name is not of primary, altho of some, importance. Essential is the content.

The Labor party in America has been repeatedly discredited because what went under the name of Labor party was really a people's front party. Such mixed class parties of the "poorer" classes suffered universally from the fact that they could never pursue a consistent course because of the absence of any single dominating class philosophy. They were destroyed by their enemies who took advantage of their non-class outlook to bribe them out of existence with a few reforms; but they were more often destroyed by themselves either thru the clash of internal forces, arising from inherent class antagonisms, once they took power, or from an inability to "take the next step" in any consistent direction once they gained certain immediate demands. These failures, however, were not inherent in the Labor party but in a non-

class or middle-class party which went under the false colors of "Labor party."

Unfortunately, many of our comrades have had to taste the bitter effects of such people's front affairs in America, especially some middle western states. But such comrades, especially those who are able to distinguish between a people's front and a labor front in France, should also be able to differentiate between a people's front and a labor front in Minnesota or Wisconsin or Harlem. Just because the Communists try to wash the united front in the muddy bath of the people's front is no reason why we, when letting out the muddy waters, should also let the potentially healthy baby go down the drain with the rubbish.

A Labor party in America would mark a great step forward. It would mean that the trade unions, which today control millions of workers and have them dissipate their energies in playing cat and mouse with various capitalist politicians, would declare a political declaration of independence. The organized trade union movement would in bulk action lift the class consciousness of the worker from the purely economic to the political level. If the Socialist party can help act as the lever in this process it has accomplished a colossal task.

But the decisive task is to get organized labor to make a political declaration of independence, not to have it jump out of the non-partisan capitalist frying pan into the class collaborationist fire of the people's front.

This formulation of the problem does not imply that a Labor party must be composed solely of proletarian groups whether of the economic or political type. It means that the basic philosophy of the party is that of the class struggle; i.e. a recognition of the fact that although there are more classes than two in present capitalist society the dominant struggle is that between the proletariat and the capitalists. A sound Labor party must be a proletarian class party, not in the sense that every affiliate must be proletarian but in the sense that its class direction must be that of the working class.

### Marxists Must Build Labor Party

A Marxist does not wait for things to happen in order to tag along after events. And neither does a Marxist try to create events solely in accord with his own subjective wishes.

Some comrades take the position that they will wait and see whether or not a Labor party is formed. Until it is formed we should openly oppose it. When it is formed we shall try to work with it to expose it.

This position is just confusion worse confounded. It is an expression of theoretical and practical despair.

First, if we openly oppose a Labor party, our orientation can not be to work with or within it once it is formed. Our hostile attitude in the period when it is being formed will close all doors to us.

Second, it is impossible to work within in order to expose, without becoming a hopelessly discredited, sectarian, disruptive force. Every move we make, every statement we issue will hint or state the fact that we are in the Labor party to destroy it. Better to be on the outside, openly fighting it than on the inside with such a crazy policy that makes us hated by our allies and makes us impotent before our enemies.

The hopeless confusion, contradiction, and self negation of this policy which declares that a Labor party is a "backward step with forward implications which we oppose while supporting" arises from the basic confusion of the role of a revolutionary party in a labor electoral machine. More generally stated, the confusion arises from a poor understanding of the subjective role as it must be played in objective environments.

Positively stated:

A concrete analysis of the American scene will reveal

certain historical forces that make a mass Labor party not only possible but likely. Such a Labor party may very well slip into the populist trap. Whether or not it shall do so depends not only on certain objective forces but also on the healthy influence we, as a subjective power, may wield in the movement for a Labor party.

Should we oppose a Labor party, we guarantee in advance that we shall play no decisive part in determining the nature of the Labor party. The party when it develops will be just such a party as we do not want. And in most cases we will find ourselves compelled finally to seek admittance or to be part of just such an undesirable sort of people's party.

### Nature of Labor Party Depends on Socialists

Should we attempt to take the lead in the formation of a Labor party, we will then play a role in determining the nature of such a party. We will not be in the ridiculous position of criticizing a party for certain misshapen features which we helped to create by our own passivity.

Some comrades are frightfully worried that if we press for such a Labor party we shall have to take responsibility for an organization with whose policies we do not agree. May we point out that we as Socialists work with might and main to build and strengthen the American Federation of Labor which has just asked for the withdrawal of recognition from the Soviet Union. May we point out that in ALL our mass work we build organizations with whose program we do not necessarily agree. And a Labor party is one such mass organization, the fact that it is called a PARTY should not fool revolutionaries although it will always bewilder reformists who do not understand the double meaning and function of the word PARTY.

It is shockingly amusing to note the KHVOSTISM of many comrades on the Labor party question. But it is a "left" khvostism. The reformist KHVOSTIST waits for things to happen and then applauds, no matter what it is. The "left" KHVOSTIST waits for things to happen and then moans, groans, and curses the working class for its damned stupidity. The Marxist is not a pedant, either of the Pollyanna or blue-law variety. The Marxist does not rely merely on the spontaneity of the masses nor does he reckon without the spontaneity of the masses. The Marxist attempts to give realistic direction to the spontaneous movements developed by the masses. Unless we understand this we become hopeless sectarians of the "left" or "right" variety.

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In this article I have dealt with only one aspect of the Labor party question; namely, the relationship between such a party and a revolutionary party which should be a federated body within the Labor party. I have omitted a number of questions for lack of space such as the function of such a party in the present epoch of capitalism, the limitations as well as the powers of such a party, the extent of the NON-electoral activities of a Labor party, the effect of such a party upon the increase in united class action on the part of the trade unions, the value of such a party as an organizing force in the economic field, the agitational value of such a party in forging the bonds of unity between the working class and other classes, groups and individuals in capitalist society. All these questions, which are rich with substance and deserving of separate articles, I have omitted, until some later time perhaps. I have here dealt with what I consider to be the necessary prerequisite in any Labor party discussion; namely, HOW DO WE APPROACH THE PROBLEM. I have tried to outline the APPROACH of revolutionary Marxism in opposition to the approach of parliamentary cretinism and purist sectarianism.

# Communists Play "Follow the Leader"

By ALBERT GOLDMAN

**A** CONVENTION in the life of a revolutionary working class party that believes in and practices the principle of democratic centralism is an extremely important occasion. It affords an opportunity for the membership of the party, through elected delegates, to express their views on questions confronting the party members and the working class and permits the reaching of a final decision on such questions. A convention is a convenient and necessary institution, giving a revolutionary party a chance to look back upon its progress or lack of it, evaluate the policies followed, correct mistakes and gather its forces for the march onward with substantial or slight changes in direction and tempo.

No one in the least acquainted with the life of the Communist party in this country or anywhere else expects any discussion prior to a convention or during a convention or expects any new policy to come out of a convention. That is, no one who thinks independently and is not a blind devotee of the "beloved leader." A convention is as necessary and useful for the Communist party as is the calling of Parliament by Hitler. A perfectly superfluous gesture to deceive the naive and credulous who think that to discuss whether a policy handed down has been executed correctly is identical with a discussion on the correctness of the policy itself.

Examine the publications of the Communist party and you will find no trace of any view contrary to the official viewpoint on any of the problems raised at the convention. All the policies were already decided upon before the convention by the "beloved leaders" great and small, and all there was left for the followers was to accept with great enthusiasm. And the members of the C. P. have come to take the system for granted. In the "Party Life" column of the DAILY WORKER of July 17, a worried comrade writes: "There is an attitude which we have to break down in our educational work. The comrades in the Units feel that all the questions of the Party are settled in the higher Party bodies. Therefore they don't have to worry about it in the Unit; there'll be a statement in the DAILY WORKER on it anyhow. So why discuss it." We can assure the comrade that the attitude will not be broken down.

## Convention Adds Nothing New

Every one of the ideas embodied in every one of the resolutions placed before the agreeable delegates were contained in the utterances or writings of Browder long before the convention took place. The august gathering was simply for the purpose of placing a formal stamp of approval upon those ideas. Was it very difficult to predict that the convention would declare that the Farmer-Labor party is the task of tasks confronting the American revolutionary movement? Nor did it take great prophetic powers to foresee that the convention would "establish the fact" that the Republican party-Liberty League-Hearst combination is the anti-Christ against whom alone the efforts of all good people should be concentrated and that we are at present faced with the alternative of democracy or fascism and not of fascism or socialism. Nor would it have been a marvel of prescience to indicate that the delegates—all seven hundred and fifty of them—would declare that it is necessary to rally all peace-loving people around the peace policy of the Soviet Union in order to abolish wars from this turbulent world.

That which was or should have been expected happened. Browder's report followed the lines indicated in his speeches and writings in the last few months and the

resolutions followed Browder's report.

In the speeches of Browder, in the resolutions of the convention, in the articles explaining the meaning of the convention it is proclaimed over and over again that "our main immediate political task . . . is to win the masses . . . for a Farmer-Labor Party." And why should the masses spend the energy necessary to build a Farmer-Labor party? In the words of the Communist platform: "to fight for and establish a People's Government, a government of, for and by the people."

Quite a task! Abraham Lincoln thought it could be done but then Abraham Lincoln was not and never claimed to be a Marxist. The writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin and even of the disciples of Stalin were not referred to with reference to the possibility of creating a classless people's government.

There are some comrades who incline to say that this is too much; there will be a revolt amongst the intelligent Communists. But these comrades underestimate the power of a bureaucratic apparatus that has succeeded in establishing its authority over the minds of people who in all other respects seem to be of normal intelligence. Until the line is changed we can expect all the Communists even those who might read Lenin's State and Revolution, to preach the formation of a people's government.

Falling in with the fundamental idea of a people's government is the main slogan of the convention embodied in the Communist platform and that is: For a Free, Prosperous and Happy America! And of course the inference is that such an America can be brought into existence without any proletarian revolution—simply through the creation of a Farmer-Labor party.

## A Combination That Terrifies

Until such time as the American people can take over the government for themselves they must concentrate on that really dreadful combination of the Republican party, the Liberty League and Hearst. "The chief political center of extreme capitalist reaction, which carries the threat of fascism today is the Republican Party—Liberty League—Hearst combination." Again: "The Communist Party declares that the struggle against reaction and incipient fascism demands the utmost unification and concentration of all forces of the working class and its allies against the Republican—Liberty League—Hearst combination." (DAILY WORKER, June 16, 1936).

Does that mean that the C.P. has come out for supporting Roosevelt? Not in so many words. The Communists insist that Roosevelt is not fighting that combination as he should and that is why, it is to be presumed, they are not calling upon the masses openly to support Roosevelt. Of course Browder, in his report at the convention, was bold enough to state that there is no principle connected with refusing to vote for a bourgeois candidate like Roosevelt. And to support his boldness he had the temerity to cite Lenin on the necessity of the proletariat to support the democratic bourgeoisie in a bourgeois democratic revolution. Perhaps he thinks we need a bourgeois democratic revolution in this country.

Lenin pointed out that after the death of a great revolutionist the real essence of his revolutionary theories is emasculated and vulgarised by opportunists. And Lenin is now suffering the same fate. And out of seven hundred and fifty delegates there was not one with spirit enough to cry "Shame" upon this disgusting effort to

enlist Lenin in the work of betrayal.

It is true that the Communists formally are not endorsing Roosevelt, but in concentrating their attack on the Republican party as the bearer of fascism and in mildly chiding Roosevelt for his failure to come out more aggressively against the Liberty Leaguers they are practically advising the workers that to vote for Roosevelt is to vote for the lesser evil. The Stalinists have changed their policy since the German catastrophe but only to substitute the policy of the Social Democrats for the sectarian policies of the Third Period.

Recently they have called for a conference to stop Landon and have urged Lewis and Hillman to take the lead in such a conference. Since these labor leaders are heart and soul for the election of Roosevelt what would be the meaning of such a conference if not to whip it up for Roosevelt?

### **Bourgeois Democracy versus Fascism**

The theoretical justification for concentrating the attack on the Liberty League—Hearst combination is the theory that the working class is at the present time faced with the alternative of bourgeois democracy or fascism. This theory of course is not the product of Browder's hard thinking but it goes back to Dimitroff and back of him to the beloved Stalin. Enunciated with great profundity at the Seventh Congress it is used to justify the most opportunistic policies.

In this respect the Socialist party is one hundred per cent correct. To defeat fascism one must attempt to mobilize the masses for the destruction of the very system of capitalist democracy which gives rise to fascism. This does not mean that we urge the workers to be indifferent to their democratic rights. On the contrary we must mobilize the workers for a struggle for every democratic right which they possess and do not possess under the capitalist system. But that is simply for the purpose of strengthening their forces for the destruction of the capitalist system. When we say that the real alternative is fascism or socialism it does not mean that unless we get socialism in this election fascism will result. This is the way the Communists attempt to pose the question.

It means that revolutionary Socialists recognize that the development of capitalist society has reached a point where the capitalist democratic regime cannot function and if that regime is not destroyed by the forces of the proletariat it will be destroyed by the forces of fascist reaction. With that as a perspective we do not struggle to save the bourgeois DEMOCRATIC REGIME but we struggle for the DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS OF THE WORKERS. The Communists also claim that they are struggling for democracy in order ultimately to bring in socialism. Whatever the intention of the Communist leaders may be, the effect of their incorrect theory is to demoralize both the workers and the middle class and open the way for fascism.

Much has been said and written about the reformist attitude on war which the Communists have adopted within the last year. The slogan of collective security accepted by the Stalinist regime as a safeguard for the Soviet Union and subsequently adopted by all the Communist parties was augmented in the Communist platform by the immediate demand for the "complete prohibition of the sale or delivery of goods, or the granting of loans to nations engaged in a foreign war contrary to the provisions of the Kellogg Peace Pact." The Marxist interpretation of the nature of imperialist war with its rejection of the idea of an aggressor nation is thrown over-board and in its stead we find ourselves scrutinizing a document drawn up by a former Republican Secretary of State to determine our attitude to a particular capitalist nation. Exactly who shall determine the question as to

which particular nation was guilty of violating the Peace Pact is not stated. We presume the Communists will be guided by their investigators and lawyers.

The Socialist party has many amongst its members who are sincere pacifists and consequently bring forth the most grotesque ideas as to the method of stopping war but we have yet to see such Socialists produce anything so idiotic as the above idea of the Communists.

### **Comparison with 1934 Convention**

It is difficult to imagine that only a little over two years ago the same party held a convention in Cleveland at which convention ideas were expressed which are the exact opposite of the ideas presented at the last convention. The 8th convention of the C.P. held two years ago issued a Manifesto and the ideas found therein cannot possibly be harmonized with the concepts propounded at the 9th.

"There is no possible way out of the crisis in the interest of the masses except by breaking the control of the State power now in the hands of this small monopolist capitalist class. There is no way out except by establishing a new government of the workers in alliance with the poor farmers, the Negro people and the impoverished middle class.

There is no way out except by the creation of a revolutionary democracy of the toilers, which is at the same time a stern dictatorship against the capitalists and their agents... There is no way out in short except by the abolition of the capitalist system and the establishment of a Socialist society."

We can accept this portion of the Manifesto without qualification.

The eighth convention was held after Hitler came to power; after the brave struggle of the Austrian workers against Dolfuss; even after the general strike against the fascists of France. But the theory of social-fascism was still accepted. At that time a non-Communist was either a fascist, or a semi-fascist or a variety of social-fascist. That convention "established the fact" that the New Deal was a "program of fascization" that the "fascization of the trade unions" had reached a dangerous stage and that "in this trickery of the masses Roosevelt has the utmost support of the A.F. of L. bureaucrats, Socialists and liberals." The Socialist party was at that time the "third party of capitalism" and a possible Farmer-Labor party would be a "new left social-fascist party."

### **Revolutionary Phrases Retained**

Ideas, however, are very easily discarded in the life of the Communist movement. Without the slightest explanation and certainly without the least preparation in the form of discussion, the old stand-bys were dropped; the Socialist party became a brother party of the working class; the Farmer-Labor party the only hope of the working class; Roosevelt a mild liberal who was not calling upon the Communists in his struggle against the American fascists organized in the Liberty League.

It would be folly to expect that the old revolutionary phrases would disappear entirely from the resolutions and speeches. The tremendous appeal which the Communist movement has for the revolutionary workers lies in the fact that these workers sincerely think that the Communist International is still the revolutionary International of Lenin and that it is devoted to the effort of overthrowing the system which every advanced worker hates. For the Communists to discard altogether the revolutionary phraseology and cling to a consistent system of reformist ideas would mean the complete loss of their influence.

Not only can they not afford to get rid of the revolutionary word but they must actually assume the pose of critics of the Socialists as reformists. This fundamental necessity of playing a dual role in order to keep the

good will of both the liberal bourgeoisie and the revolutionary workers explains the tactics of the Communists in France and in Spain. They have to talk "left" once in a while; they must appear as the supporters of the workers' struggles ever so often. But in reality their activities have nothing at all to do with the interests of the proletarian revolution. And it is hardly likely that they will ever come out in the open as avowed revisionists of Marx and Lenin. They would thereby lose all their influence with the revolutionary section of the working class.

And so in the resolutions of the last convention and even in the platform there are tucked away suggestions about the necessity of establishing Socialism through the Soviet power. "Such policies," states the resolution, "will create favorable conditions for the overthrow of capitalist rule altogether, the establishment of Soviet Power and the building of Socialism." A necessary insertion which has no relationship to the actual policies pursued.

### **Zig-Zag Policy**

How long will this change last? There are Socialists who doubt the "sincerity" of the Communists. Alas they are terribly in earnest. Their opportunism is not a cloak which is to be put on and taken off to please the liberals and some Socialists. It is basic to their whole conception built around the theory of building socialism in the Soviet Union—and only in the Soviet Union. Their previous sectarian ultra leftism is but a different form of their basic reformism. What attitude the Communists will take to the bourgeoisie of their own country will depend entirely upon the relationship of the Soviet Union to that particular country. The foreign policy of the Stalin regime will determine the particular garment which the Communists will don to cover their opportunist nakedness.

It is not at all excluded that in the future there will be a swing back to the most insane sectarianism. The alliances between the different imperialists are not yet stabilized and it is possible that the different imperialist

rivals might succeed in making a temporary bargain, with the Soviet Union left out. In which case to "protect and defend the Soviet Union" it might be necessary to designate every one who thinks it essential for the workers to develop their consciousness before calling on them for revolution—to designate such a person as a left or right social fascist.

The exigencies of Soviet diplomacy will determine the tactics of the Communist parties. And not the need for a revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system to solve the problems of the whole working class including the workers of the Soviet Union.

### **Communists Weep for Socialists**

This was the first convention where the Communists showed so much solicitude for the welfare of the Socialist party. No wild attacks, no name-calling; only a note of regret that the Socialist party does not see eye to eye with the C. P. on the questions of war, of the united front, of struggling for bourgeois democracy against fascism, for our failure to leave Roosevelt alone and concentrate our attacks on the infamous combination of the Liberty-League and Hearst. Weeping and wailing were on the order of the day. "The Socialists were isolating themselves from the masses by their sectarian tactics." And of course the Stalinists could not refrain from pointing with alarm at the entry of the "pernicious" Trotskyists into the S. P. For are the latter not the protagonists of the class struggle; are they not opposed to the People's Front and to the idea of supporting good capitalist nations against bad capitalist nations in any war?

And above all are they not opposed to the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. That is an unforgivable crime. The C. P. must henceforth dedicate its efforts to save the Socialist party. And on the other hand the revolutionary Marxists in the Socialist party must attempt to save the revolutionary workers from the corroding influence of Stalinism.

## *The American Youth Congress*

By JOHN NEWTON THURBER

**T**HE YOUTH Congress, while in general resembling such groups as the League Against War and Fascism, is a peculiar organization. It was the brain child of a young fascist, Viola Ilma, who felt that ALL YOUTH could be grouped in one organization, in order to exert political influence in America. She got her idea from a study of Hitler's youth organization in Germany.

The meeting of Miss Ilma's congress two years ago, near New York, was captured by left wing youth groups, among them Young Communists and Young Socialists, and it has been in their hands since that time. Some doubt about what to do about it has existed since.

### **Young Communists Careful of Timid Liberals**

During the past year the Young Communists have clearly dominated the Youth Congress. The Young Socialists have raised their voices in criticism, not of this fact, but have questioned the methods and aims which they have set up in this domination. While this may be grabbed up as a red-baiting attitude, as it was by the Cleveland Plain Dealer, it is not that. The Yipsels did not criticize the Young Communists for being Communists or for dominating the Congress; rather they criticized them for not being either Communists or even working class in their position.

At Cleveland the Young Communists were concerned more with keeping solid with YMCA's, YWCA's, settle-

ment houses and Young Townsendites, than with the progressive trade unionists and Socialists. An attempt by the Young Socialists and a number of friendly groups to have a "Declaration of Purpose," having a working class basis, substituted for the Declaration of Rights, was given a most unfriendly reception. Instead the Young Communist leadership, over the opposition of their own membership, forced the elimination of the sentence calling for public ownership from the Detroit document at the instance of the YWCA delegation.

### **Communists Denounce Class Approach**

Reading the proposed substitute before one of the sections of the Congress, comrade Murray Gross, delegate from the second largest trade union local in the country, No. 22 of the ILGWU, was hissed and booed by those who wished to keep the Youth Congress as it is.

At the general session on Sunday afternoon, July 5, on three occasions progressive trade union delegates, in one case a Communist sympathiser, were booed by the bulk of the Congress for attempting to put forward working class proposals. These three were from the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, the Toledo Central Labor Union and the Mechanics Educational Society, Cleveland District. It would seem that it is expected to build an anti-fascist front without labor!



The chief bone of contention was the adoption of a constitution. This document would bind all affiliated organizations to the Youth Congress more tightly than any such body has done before. Each group will have to pay a per capita to the Youth Congress. Each decision of an unwieldy "Executive Committee" of 63 (a large body easy to control from the center) will be binding upon all affiliates. The only way such decisions can be reversed is through a 2/3 vote at the next Congress meeting.

Any thinking person would oppose such a document. Those who dared to work with the Yipsels in opposing it, however, were branded as "disrupters." The Young Communists have even taught their followers, including the Young Townsendites, who seem willing to follow them, to call the Yipsels "Trotskyites," the worst name in the vocabulary of the Stalinists.

The Young Socialists are now pointing out that the next step in the development of the Youth Congress will be the formation of a political party on this basis, classless and perhaps just Youth for Youth's sake. It is taking on the form of a junior People's Front, a People's Front which is willing to exclude the Socialists and the militant trade unionists because they are Marxian and therefore unacceptable to middle class elements.

#### Y. C. L. Attitude Explained

The explanation for this situation lies in the great reversal of position which has been made by the Third In-

ternational since the Franco-Soviet pact and the 7th World Congress of the C.I. last summer. In declaring that the struggle is no longer between capitalism and socialism but between Fascism and Democracy, in declaring for collaboration with capitalist governments in military alliance with the USSR to maintain the status quo, in reaching a position where individual communist parties will support war making governments which may be allied with the Soviet Union, all Stalinist Communists are having to shift their affections from revolutionary groups to the middle class, patriotic, non-working class, anti-revolutionary elements. Sometime last fall the Communist party passed the Socialist party and now it stands to the right of us, or more accurately, moves on to the right. Our party is the only one this year which offers Socialism as the alternative to capitalism. Our party, when war comes, is likely to be standing alone in opposition to it. According to the Stalinists, "we will be isolated from the masses."

We must educate the masses to understand the position we now occupy. Our criticism of the Communists is not red-baiting. We are not opposing the United Front, but are criticising its distortion. We cannot work in a permanent alliance with non-working class elements, for it would only tie our hands in our struggle for Socialism. The Youth Congress may yet be saved, but it will only be of value if it is transformed to a working class basis such as the Yipsels suggested.

## The YPSL and the AYC

By ERNEST ERBER

**T**HE PROBLEM that faced the YPSL at Cleveland as an organization of revolutionary Socialist youth may be summed up as follows. (1) The existence of the American Youth Congress is a living fact that cannot be altered by calling it good or bad. (2) The YPSL has been part of the AYC since its inception and therefore carries a certain share of the responsibility for its existence. It has a further responsibility to the groups that have looked to it for leadership in the AYC. (3) During the last year all the tendencies that make the AYC a Junior People's Front have been strengthened and all the tendencies that make it a united front have been weakened. (4) The YPSL knew it could not permanently be part of a People's Front movement even if it remained with objections to the character of the movement. It therefore had to hold the perspective of fighting to change its character and to assume the perspective of breaking when it became obvious that no hope of effecting such a change remained.

#### Only One Course Possible

The question then arises as to what change the YPSL could propose. The League understands that a united front organization on a permanent basis for even minimum demands like the American Youth Act becomes a propaganda organization in the end and propaganda is a function revolutionists always jealously reserve for their own organization. The circumstances permitted only one course. We proposed that the AYC become a machinery to keep organizations in contact with one another so that it could readily initiate united front **actions** as the need for such actions arose. This was our central proposal and we carried the fight around it as it effected every other question that arose before the Congress.

Comrade Thurber is correct when he says the YPSL stresses the need of a workingclass base for the AYC and such activities as will align it on the side of labor in the class struggle. We did not however, approach the

question from the need of the AYC declaring that it needs a workingclass base. As Marxists we seek to involve the middle classes in the class struggle on the side of the workers not by saying that a movement without a labor base is valueless, but by involving the middle class elements in united front actions with the workingclass. We rest assured that the workingclass leadership of such united fronts will not be threatened as long as the leaders of the workingclass themselves do not betray its interests. (The People's Front is precisely such a betrayal of the interests of the workers to those of the middle classes.)

#### A "CIO" for the AYC

The YPSL has not broken with the AYC. We have remained in and built a bloc of powerful trade unions and other organizations to carry on the fight inside the AYC to convert it into a united front machinery. We still continue the agitation for our united front pact called a "Declaration of Purpose" which we proposed at Cleveland. We will engage in all united front **actions** the AYC carries out like parades, demonstrations, mass meetings (we will let the YCL run the art exhibits and boat rides). But we will do more than agitate for the correct united front structure. We will demonstrate what we mean by initiating united front actions **outside** the AYC in which we will involve youth organizations of both the working and the middle class youth organizations in the AYC and organizations outside the AYC. If the YCL remains obstinate and continues to impose its People's Front concept upon the AYC by means of its mechanical control, it may become necessary to utilize these united front actions outside the AYC to build up a new united front center for the organizations of youth willing to act on specific questions of the fight against militarism, for civil liberties, and for the defense of the economic interests of the youth.

# The Spanish Revolution: Bourgeois or Proletarian

By B. M. F.

**NOTE.** The following article was written before the reactionary army officers and Fascists attempted to gain political power and destroy the organizations of the working class. What the outcome of that attempt will be is not certain at the time of going to press. An evaluation of the stirring and significant struggle will appear in the next issue of the Appeal.

**S**INCE April, 1931 when the monarchy was overthrown, the basic issue within the Spanish working class has been: does Spain have before it a period of capitalist development—or can the workers, supported by the peasantry, make the proletarian revolution in this period? Though a number of other questions complicate the picture, the issue of bourgeois or proletarian revolution is the decisive issue on which the proletariat has divided into two warring camps. This is the issue which has split the Socialist party, for all practical purposes, into two separate organizations.

The Right Wing Socialists, led by Pesteiros and Prieto, have clung consistently to the theory that Spain has before it a considerable period of capitalist development. They participated in a coalition with the Republicans from 1931 to 1933; learned nothing from the victory of reaction during 1933-1935; and would have accepted President Azaña's recent invitation to enter the cabinet if they had not been forced to retreat by the terrific repercussions from the Socialist ranks. Though not formally part of the cabinet, they support it unreservedly. They consider that the burning question of distribution of the land can be solved by a gradual process of government purchases and re-distribution among the peasantry who will repay the government through long-term loans, and consequently they refuse to take any responsibility for Socialist peasants who seize landed estates. They consider that much of the present unemployment will be solved by government encouragement of the development of backward Spanish industry and transport, with the government "priming the pump" and filling in industrial gaps through public works; and they consequently denounce the epidemic of Syndicalist and Socialist-led strikes as irresponsibly driving the Spanish capitalists into the arms of reaction and making it impossible for the government to begin its constructive work. They point to Spain's poverty as the excuse for the government's slowness in distributing the land and reviving industry, and for its failure to establish a system of unemployment relief.

How long they propose to continue class-collaboration with the Republican bourgeoisie they do not say; but certainly they view it as requiring a decade or more. They are really not Socialists at all; like Social-Revolutionaries and most of the Mensheviks of Czarist Russia, and so many self-termed Marxists of semi-colonial and colonial countries, the first test of independent proletarian activity revealed them to be merely petty-bourgeois republicans. It has been reported, and not denied by Prieto, that he will lead a fusion with Azaña's republican party if the Left Wing Socialists prevail in the Socialist party.

## Forces Leading to Development of Left Wing

The present Left Wing of the Socialist party, whose most prominent leader is Largo Caballero, only began to differentiate itself from the Right Wing on the eve of the Asturian uprising of October, 1934. In the first two

years of the republic it followed the line of the Right Wing; Largo Caballero himself was Minister of Labor in the coalition government and forced many a strike from the field of struggle into the debilitating channels of arbitration. The use of the state apparatus to favor the Socialist-led U.G.T. (General Workers' Union) against the anarcho-syndicalist trade union federation, the C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labor) left a bitterness in the ranks of the latter that still remains one of the chief stumbling blocks to united action. After two years of collaboration with the republicans, a massacre of striking peasants by government soldiers, for which Casares Quiroga (the Minister of Interior and now Premier) was responsible, climaxed a whole series of repressions against the workers and peasants. The resultant outcry led to Socialist withdrawal from the cabinet. But by then the masses had been rendered passive and disillusioned; the Anarcho-syndicalists adduced the record of the Socialists as further proof of the correctness of their traditional anti-parliamentarianism; and the next election saw the Catholics, monarchists and ultra-conservative republicans victorious. The conservative Republicans under Lerroux formed a cabinet, but actual control of the government was in the hands of Gil Robles and the Catholics. Step by step Gil Robles moved to crush the trades unions, to establish Fascist armed forces and to take over openly the reigns of government.

The impact of these events drove a large part of the Socialist party to the left. Finally Caballero declared for the perspective of proletarian revolution. Hurried attempts were made to arm the workers to defend themselves against the fascization of the regime. However, the work of rallying the masses was given such a purely conspiratorial form that it defeated its own purposes; it took the form of military organization only; the masses were not educated to the tasks ahead, were not consolidated through strikes and demonstrations and workers' councils. So that, when the outbreak against the semi-fascist government finally took place, in October, 1934, the government, in most places including the Socialist stronghold, Madrid, smashed the uprising by seizing the key figures and the caches of arms. Only in Asturias where the workers' councils had been formed and had functioned for some time, the miners, largely under Socialist leadership, conducted a heroic struggle and were only put down after weeks of fighting, when the government—unopposed elsewhere—brought in the native Moroccan troops and let them sack Oviedo in an orgy of slaughter, robbery and rape. The saying in Spain is that if there had been three Asturiases, the revolution would have succeeded.

But the Asturian rebellion was not a failure. It was, indeed, a decisive blow against the reaction. A large part of the army had proven itself "untrustworthy"; one of its chief divisions had been sent to Asturias and had "been lost" for weeks on the road. The passivity and defeatism of the masses was burned out by the heroic example of the Asturian miners. The Catholics failed to find sufficient forces among the small middle class, and met with no success at all in the peasantry, in seeking to build a Fascist corps. Gil Robles dared not take over the government. The October defeat had left the peasant-proletarian forces largely intact. A financial scandal, exposing the corruption of the Lerroux cabinet, proved its final undoing. The government was forced to call new elections. The Left Republican-Socialist-Communist ticket was tacitly supported by the syndicalist

masses. The semi-fascist regime gave way to a Left Republican cabinet supported by Socialists and Communists.

### Left Socialists Adopted Revolutionary Perspective in Words

In his "Address to the Communist League" of 1850, drawing the lessons of the revolutions of 1848, Marx warned that, immediately after the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat have together overthrown reaction and the petty bourgeoisie have taken the reigns of government, the proletariat must immediately take the road of intransigent struggle against the new government, preventing it from consolidating its power and building in opposition to it the power of the workers. This was the obvious tactic for the workers to pursue against the new Azaña government.

Moving in this general direction, the Left Socialists adopted in April, 1936 in their stronghold, Madrid, a program to be presented to the forthcoming national convention. That program explicitly declared that the bourgeoisie could not carry out the democratic tasks of the bourgeois revolution, above all was incapable of settling the agrarian question, and that therefore these tasks become part of the tasks of the proletarian revolution, which is on the order of the day. It was this program which precipitated the split between the Left Socialists and the Right Wing which denounced it as a Bolshevik document.

But the adoption of the Left Socialist program in April was not accompanied by a decisive break with the Popular Front government, though logically it should have done so. Instead, borrowing from the Stalinists their theory of "stages," Caballero has declared that the Popular Front government has "not yet entirely exhausted its possibilities." He also declares that trade union and political unity must precede a turn to the proletarian revolution. His daily paper, "Claridad," denounces the Right Wing for its servile support of the government, but Caballero and his deputies also vote for the government in the Cortes. Indeed, to describe Caballero's position would be to describe a crazy-quilt of ideas, eclectically scrambled together. The Right Wing Socialist daily "El Socialista" and the weekly of the small "Party of Marxist Unity," "La Batalla" often quote side by side a half-dozen quotations from Caballero, made in one day or two, all mutually contradictory. The man is a positive burlesque of the centrist type, shifting, inconclusive, verbose and a political chameleon. The drive of the Left Wing does not come from him. That drive has been expressed in the refusal to vote for popular front tickets in the presidential election, some Socialist sections putting up their own tickets; in Socialist leadership of strikes and occupation of landed estates; in participation in workers councils in Asturias and elsewhere; in arming the workers and in armed encounters against the Fascists. The contrast between Caballero and the basic core of the Left Wing finds expression even in "Claridad," where Javier Rueno, leader of the Asturias rebellion, and other Socialists write consistently against the government.

Undoubtedly, the Socialist masses side with the Left Wing. One recent indication was the re-election of Caballero as secretary of the U.G.T., while ex-president Pesteiros was not re-elected. The Right Wing has taken desperate measures to retain control: the convention has been postponed from June to October, "Claridad" has been outlawed, and the district committees have been instructed to "reorganize" dissident sections. The recent "election" for vacancies on the National Executive was a farce, the Right Wing simply not counting most of the Left Wing votes. There are really now two Socialist parties in Spain.

### Reformist Influence of Communists

The development of the Left Wing has been seriously handicapped by Stalinist influence. In 1931, the Communist party recognized that the task for Spain was a proletarian revolution; but rendered itself impotent by its rabidly sectarian attitude, calling the Socialists "social-fascists," opposing any united action, etc. Today, like its sister parties everywhere, the Spanish Communist party explicitly denies that the choice is between Socialism or Fascism, declares that the Popular Front government can solve the agrarian question and revive economy and, in a word, is even more vociferous in its support of Azaña than are the Right Wing Socialists. Azaña is a "friend of the Soviet Union" because he condescendingly praises its peace policy: ergo Azaña must be supported. Seeking to drown out the authentic Left Wing elements, the Communist party works assiduously for organic unity. It has already succeeded in dissolving the Young Communist organization into the Socialist Youth, with the result that the Socialist Youth, hitherto always acting as a vanguard for the party is today decidedly to the right of it. The vacillating elements in the Left Wing Socialists are in the warmest relations to the C. P.; while the genuine Left Wingers are in sharp conflict with it. The Stalinists have already secured the expulsion from the united youth organization of some of the best militants.

The "Party of Marxist Unity", born of a fusion of the former Trotskyists with Maurin's Right Wing Communist opposition might have played an important part in the development of the Socialist Left Wing by entering it and strengthening it. But Maurin values his organizational "independence" far more than revolutionary politics. To retain an excuse for keeping his own little organization, Maurin has resorted to a line of refusing to recognize the genuineness of the Left Wing development in the Socialist party, and declares that in practically everything both wings are identical. "La Batalla" has even gone so far as to say that if the split actually takes place it will lead to only dire results for the whole labor movement! The latest antic of this group is to call for "an authentic Government of the Popular Front, with the direct (ministerial) participation of the Socialist and Communist parties" as a means to "complete the democratic experience of the masses" and thus hasten the revolution. This tommyrot, at a time when the Left Wing Socialists are engaged in a murderous struggle with the Right Wing precisely because the Lefts are opposed to Socialist entry into the government. The Maurin-Nin group has eliminated itself as a progressive factor.

### United Action Through Workers' Councils Essential

Of fundamental importance to the Spanish revolution is the problem of winning the support of the syndicalist-led peasants and workers; next to the Socialist masses, this is the second-most important element in Spain. What is needed here is, not the abstract slogan of unity advanced by Caballero, but united action through workers councils (soviets) in which Socialists and other elements would be represented on a proportional basis. These councils would be both the organs of the defense against reaction and fascism, and of the proletarian power after a victorious revolution. But, unfortunately, the Madrid program of the Left Socialists makes the one error which is fatal to any collaboration with the C.N.T. for revolutionary struggle. It declares that "the organ of the proletarian dictatorship will be the Socialist party." This is precisely what the anarchist leaders have been accusing both Communists and revolutionary Socialists of meaning by the proletarian dictatorship; and to out-Stalin Stalin's bureaucratic distortion of the proletarian power (even the Stalinist bureaucracy pretends to rule through the soviets) is the worst error that the Left Socialists could make in Spain, with its anarchist traditions. In-

deed, if Caballero had deliberately sought to render the Left Wing program impotent, he could not have chosen a better method than of identifying the revolutionary government with party rule.

The basic tendency of the Left Socialists, their recognition that Spain, no more than Russia in 1917, cannot solve even the "bourgeois-democratic" problems of dividing the land and building industry except through a workers' revolution, is the hope of the Spanish masses.

## The Coming Showdown in France

By HAROLD R. ISAACS

WITH the great strike wave of June the crisis in France came of age. Tomorrow it will mature. Today is the period of the preparation of forces, of preliminary skirmishing, of feeling out the enemy, of choosing the time and place and conditions of battle. The army that best utilizes this period will enter the approaching final conflict with the greatest advantage on its side.

Like the February revolution in Russia, the tremendous strike movement, the occupation of factories, the unfurling of the red flag over shops and ships, sprang from the spontaneous initiative of the masses. The workers took friend and foe by surprise. Their own "leaders" were even more shocked than the big bourgeoisie and its *de la Rocques*. Unprepared to wheel its own heavy artillery into action, the big bourgeoisie placed its TEMPORARY reliance upon the People's Front to stem the proletarian tide, to win them a respite until the Fascist ranks could be marshalled to smash the workers by direct means.

While thus utilizing the People's Front government, the big bourgeoisie prepares to overthrow it and replace it by an agency more suited to its needs. The inadequacy of the People's Front regime flows from the fact that it bases itself upon a program to revive French capitalism, believing that the wheels of French industry can be made to turn profitably and at the same time satisfy the demands of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie. Not understanding that the depth of the economic crisis has reached the point where only the radical transformation in the ownership of the means of production can lift the country out of its impasse, the Blum-Daladier government fails to realize how sharply the *Wendels*, the 200 families will resist its proposed reforms, how strongly they will organize to do away with the cumbersome folderol of democracy in order, under the whip of Fascism, to effect a new concentration of capital and to preserve themselves at the expense of the workers. Blum-Daladier-Thorez proceed on the false assumption that they will ward off the blows of big capitalism by convincing the workers not to "provoke" the struggle. But the crisis flows not from the workers alone, but from the crisis of capitalism itself. That is why the workers must be organized for the struggle against capitalism. That is why the workers must forge their own fighting instruments to resist the *Wendels* and their *de la Rocques*. The People's Front government does not resist, but seeks to propitiate the *Wendels* in the hope that the *Wendels* will not make use of their *de la Rocques*.

### Watchful Waiting Policy of Bourgeoisie

It was in this spirit that the People's Front Government faced the great strike wave of June. To the workers it begged: "Be calm. Do not go too far. Do not provoke the reaction!" To the big capitalist it said: "Give us the crumbs we ask or insurrection is around the corner. Back us in this and we'll save your capitalist order."

This is the dilemma of the People's Front government. It was brought into power by workers who want a

The reformism of the Right Wing Socialists and the Stalinists, the political nihilism of the anarcho-syndicalists, the organizational conservatism and political mountebankery of the Maurin-Nin group, hinder the development of the Left Socialists, but they cannot prevent it. In a word, the situation in Spain may be described as a race between reaction and the political maturity of the Left Socialists.

radical change in things as they are. In power, it tries to keep things unchanged and satisfy the workers at the same time. This it cannot do. That is why it must inevitably give way to Fascism—or to a Soviet France.

At the height of the strike wave the big bourgeoisie which was not yet prepared to smash it by its own direct means, "accepted" a settlement that added a 35% charge to the cost of production, a charge they know perfectly well French capitalism cannot stand in the present situation. They "accepted" because they wanted only to postpone the issue and avert the immediate crisis. Blum's bills, brought with desperate, fearful haste before Parliament, ("We are facing a situation in which every hour counts!" cried Blum) were voted for by the Left and Right wings together, a band of frightened parliamentarians who heard the rumble of revolution on the streets. But the Fascist agents of the big bourgeoisie had already contemptuously turned their backs on Parliament. "Our destiny is not being decided there," they bluntly announced. "The street and the factory will decide." (*Echo de Paris*, right wing organ, June 7.)

The very morrow of the settlement proved them to be right. Already drained by the ravages of the crisis, French capitalism could not actually execute the settlement without destroying itself. Workers returning to their machines, after weeks of pleading and cajolery from their leaders, met with delays, new disputes, lockouts, dismissals and speedup. The honeymoon, they discovered, was over. New, harsher strikes began to break across the country. Coal miners in the north, steel workers around Paris and in the Moselle Basin, seamen at *Marseilles*, *Toulon* and *Bordeaux*, shipyard workers at *St. Nazaire*, and workers, in hundreds of other shops and factories took possession and presented new demands. At the same time bitter clashes began to take place in the streets of Paris and other cities between striking workers and the Fascist gangs, who came out of their hiding places and openly took the offensive.

### Blum's "New Deal" for France

These new strikes and street fights rose to plague the leaders of the People's Front just as they were embarking upon their neo-Rooseveltian program for the revitalization of French capitalist economy. The economic program of the People's Front, under the pressure of the big bourgeoisie and its Radical agents inside the government, has already been watered down from the thin promises made during the election campaign. Vincent Auriol, Socialist finance minister, promised that no banks would be nationalized, that no tax on capital was contemplated. The projected "reform" of the Bank of France turned out to be nothing more radical than a new governor, a conservative ex-colonial administrator who immediately assured the regents of the bank that all would remain as before. In addition the "reform" included a bill for the revision of the statutes of the bank which in no sense whatever modifies its essential character. "Naturalization of the war industries" was boiled down to a proposal for the purchase of a few plants by the government. The

program was reduced to a plan for public works to be financed by a new loan of ten billion francs from the Bank of France (a new mortgage for the 200 families!) and the issuance of baby bonds. This program makes Roosevelt look like a Bolshevik!

Meanwhile the People's Front government extends itself to prove to the big bourgeoisie that it can carry out the essential policies of French finance capital even more efficiently than its predecessors. With Daladier as minister of national defense, it embarks upon a vast armament program. It drops without a murmur its promise to cut the two-year military service term. Blum goes to Geneva and states more daringly than any French representative has yet done the readiness of France to go to war in defense of its system of collective security and regional pacts. To all this the government, aided by the Stalinist patriots, can offer the added advantage of mobilizing the masses for the "union of the French people" against any external "aggressor." It can turn Bastille Day into a demonstration of the military might of French imperialism and get some of its followers to salute the war machine of French capitalism with the clenched fist salute of proletarian internationalism! Such are the plums it lays before the big bourgeoisie!

### **"Dissolution" of Fascists**

Against the Fascist gangs, the People's Front issues decrees of dissolution. De La Rocque laughs in Blum's face. The Croix de Feu and its allied nationalist organizations are transformed into the "French Social Party." De La Rocque openly announces that he has embarked upon the struggle for the conquest of power. "Are 1,000,000 men and women dedicated to the struggle for the renaissance of the fatherland going to be dispersed without appeal? Nobody believes it for a single instant," he wrote in his organ, LE FLAMBEAU on June 27, under the title "Toward Power." "If anyone tries to break our party, the issue will be settled through illegality."

Abhorring nothing so much as illegality, the People's Front government promptly recognized that the new Fascist party was "legal" and cringed when Croix de Feu deputies in the Chamber openly declared that they would overthrow the People's Front regime. "We'll follow you into power," warned Taittinger, "and we'll know how to deal with you!"

Unhindered, the French Fascists are carrying on an intensive campaign of organization and propaganda, with the scarcely disguised backing of the war chest of the big industrialists whose existence even Salengro, Socialist minister of the interior, admitted. Yesterday they came out onto the streets in hundreds. Today in thousands. Tomorrow? Helpless itself against the Fascist gangs, the government pleads with the workers to preserve "order" and sends its police to break up street fights, without discrimination as to where the police clubs fall. The workers' legitimate resistance to the Fascists in the streets is opposed by People's Front police. They are forbidden to organize in their own defense. In the chamber of deputies Salengro declared that if combat groups existed in the Socialist party, "I will demand their suppression this very night!" (Herald Tribune, July 1.)

### **Government Attacks Revolutionists**

Unable to resist the Fascists, the government tries to show itself more worthy of bourgeois hire by directing its really savage blows against the revolutionary currents in the working class. During the height of the strike wave LE MATIN, organ of the 200 families, ECHO DE PARIS, organ of the Fascist, and L'HUMANITE, organ of the Stalinists, joined in a daily campaign of execrating the French Trotskyists who were charged with being the "provocateurs" responsible for the continued strike struggles. The PARTI OUVRIER INTERNATIONALISTE (Workers Internationalist Party) formed in the very

fire of the struggle and its organ, LA LUTTE OUVRIERE, became the main target of police repression.

Active in the factories and on the streets, the Trotskyists propagated the slogans of revolutionary action. They told the workers that a mere "settlement," another capitalist promise, was not enough; that the Socialist-bourgeois coalition government of Blum-Daladier could only provide a temporary stop-gap, that it demoralized the workers' defenses while behind its back the real agents of finance capital prepared for the final conflict. They urged the permanence of strike committees, factory committees to safeguard the workers' gains, united by town, city and province. Only a workers' militia could smash the Fascist offensive. Only by these means could the slogan "Soviets everywhere!" come to life.

This agitation corresponded so closely to the moods of the masses that LE MATIN, charging Leon Trotsky with being the real villain of all the troubles, said on its front page of June 14: "The organ of the Trotskyists, dated June 12, indicates the line to be followed. THE DIRECTIVES CORRESPOND SINGULARLY WITH CERTAIN FACTS THAT HAVE FEATURED THE VARIOUS CONFLICTS."

So the police of Blum-Salengro descended upon the Trotskyists. ("Under the pressure of the Communists," gloated the Echo de Paris on June 16, "the government has declared war on the Paris Trotskyists.") Their paper was banned. All their equipment was taken. Twelve of the leaders associated with the paper were arrested and charged with "conspiracy against the state."

### **Government Prepares to Attack Workers**

Use of force against the most advanced workers could not fail to find its logical extension in the threat of force against striking workers everywhere. This was not long in coming, as the wave of strikes continued, breaking out everywhere beyond the control of unions and parties alike. On July 7 Salengro told the Senate that the government would not tolerate any further occupation of factories by strikers, and, he added, to the intense delight of the whole Radical and big bourgeois press, if all means of persuasion failed, "appropriate means" would be employed to force evacuation.

He explained the procedure as follows: "(1) Appeal by the trade union leaders to the strikers. (2) Appeals by the authorities to the strikers and employers. (3) Joint intervention by the trade unions, and the government. (4) Repetition of these appeals."

In case all these fail (and how normal the assumption seems that the workers are carrying on the struggle without and even against the trade unions!), he said, "FORCE WILL BE USED."

To the DELEGATION DES GAUCHES (Left deputies) Salengro explained that force would be used "with care," that the use of bayonets would be avoided. "The delegation of Left deputies UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED the statement by Salengro and decided at his request, to appeal to the workers for discipline." (Havas, July 9.)

### **Stalinists Restrain Workers**

The Stalinists expressed mild misgivings ("Comrade Salengro's statement was not very well inspired") BUT VOTED TO SUPPORT HIS PROPOSALS, as members of the delegation of Lefts. "All for the People's Front, everything through the People's Front!" reaffirmed Thorez that same day (Havas July 9). Thorez went further. "He and his followers (he said) perfectly understood the Senate's alarm over the continued labor controversy" (Associated Press, July 9). "Workers are not opposed to property," said Thorez the next day, reiterating his party's fidelity to the People's Front, and declaring, in the now familiar Stalinist formula, that it was for "the union of the whole French people." He "expressed alarm" over the fact that some Socialists

were actually talking about measures of socialization. "The future of the People's Front must not be compromised by going too fast," he said, announcing that his party "would oppose any such measures as premature," (Havas, July 10). "While the Socialists, INFLUENCED BY THE TROTSKYISTS, shouted at every corner: 'Everything is possible!' . . . we firmly replied: 'No, everything is NOT 'possible!'" (Berlioz, Daily Worker, July 15). Depend on us, cry the Stalinists to the bourgeoisie, if the Socialists go revolutionary on us, we'll keep 'em in line!

The good intentions of the Stalinists have already won recognition from the Fascists themselves. Thorez' exhortations to the strikers to "know how to end a strike" ("These words of great political wisdom . . ." reports Berlioz to the Daily Worker, July 15, "were much more effective than the irritating (?) police mobilization ordered by the Minister of Interior") were greeted by the whole right-wing press. The ECHO DE PARIS said that Thorez' words "seems to confirm . . . that the Russian leaders clearly see the danger of war, that communism cannot be installed . . . without convulsions and a general weakening of our country . . . BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW FAR FRENCH COMMUNISM WILL SUBMIT DOCILELY TO THE DIRECTIVES OF MOSCOW AND WILL NOT SOON OBEY ITS OWN BLIND IMPULSES." (ECHO DE PARIS, June 13). In other words, the Fascists understand and appreciate how much the Stalinists want civil peace, at all costs, but they have no confidence in the ability of the Stalinists to hold the masses in check. That is why, at the behest of the big bourgeoisie, they are preparing to do that job themselves.

The Fascists are consciously, rapidly preparing and marshalling their forces. The Socialist, Stalinist and trade union leaders, their faces turned pleadingly toward the big bourgeoisie, are leaving the workers to their own deserts. More, they threaten to use force ("careful force"!) against the workers if they prove recalcitrant.

This road leads straight to disaster.

#### Middle Class Repelled by Vacillation

The petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry, who still today look tentatively leftward for a way out will, if this road is pursued, turn their backs on the working class parties and the People's Front and turn toward the Fascists.

There is no greater fraud than the claim of the Socialist-Stalinist leadership that the workers must retard their struggle in order not to DRIVE AWAY the petty bour-

geoisie and the peasants. ONLY real struggle by the workers will draw the lower strata of these classes to their side. Such a struggle will drive away, to be sure, the Daladiers, the Herriots, the Chautemps, the agents of big capital in the People's Front. That is what the Stalinists fear above all else. The petty bourgeoisie itself will turn away from the workers when they get tired of trying to understand why the workers' parties order their followers to march, as they did on Bastille Day, carrying portraits of Lenin, Stalin . . . AND HERRIOT, the Radical chief who led them up their present blind alley.

#### Conquest of Power by Workers Essential

What the French workers need now is a revolutionary general staff of their own. They cannot depend in the next wave on their own spontaneity. The big bourgeoisie will be far better prepared to thrust back. The capitalist ripost may well inflict a partial defeat on the proletariat. Unless the proletariat has its firmly welded staff, such a defeat can well be a decisive defeat! The workers must be united in their own organizations, with their own staff, they must be massed in their own committees, their own societies, free of the slavish subjection to the bourgeoisie which the People's Front sponsors. All this they must be the better to withstand the capitalist counter-offensive, in order in their turn to take the offensive for power.

It is not enough to "arrest" de la Rocque, as the Stalinists demand, or to shuffle around a few police chiefs, as the government has done. The de la Rocques and their press are manipulated by big capital and the big capitalist press like puppets tied to strings. Revolutionists must strike at Fascism at its heart, in the citadels of big finance capital. De la Rocque? yes, but Wendel too and the Comite des Forges. L'ACTION FRANCAISE (Royalist-Fascist), LE FLAMBEAU? Yes, but also le TEMPS, LE MATIN and the rest.

The big bourgeoisie, if it has its way, will, in its own time, smash the People's Front government and replace it with one better to its liking. The workers must be prepared to resist this offensive of big capital. The Blum government will be incapable of doing so. Despite the miserable role played by this coalition government, the workers must take up, with their whole force, its defense against the capitalist offensive. That is why the imperative call of the day is for workers committees, peasant committees, army committees. "Soviets everywhere? Agreed. But the time has come to pass from words to action!"

## Two Defenses and an Analysis

By MELOS MOST

AN EVALUATION OF THE SOCIALIST CONVENTION. By Jack Altman Socialist Call, June 6, 1936.

THE SOCIALIST CONVENTION. By Aaron Levenstein Modern Monthly, July, 1936.

THE LEFT-WING AT THE CLEVELAND CONVENTION. By Haim Kantorovitch, American Socialist Monthly, July, 1936.

At the time of the fourth congress of the Communist International in 1923, Lenin, in order to make clear his position in relation to that of Bukharin and Zinoviev, declared: "I am a right winger." One would at least expect some of our convention apologists to introduce themselves with the same modesty.

The fact that they do not choose to do so makes two of the three above-listed articles all the less understandable. I refer to the contributions of Altman and Leven-

stein. Kantorovitch's offers a sharp contrast. The contrast can be made despite the differences in form and apparent purpose of the three pen products; for Altman and Levenstein discuss not only inner Party matters, but even inner left wing matters, to as intimate a degree though not as great a length, as does Kantorovitch.

#### The Credentials Contest

With or without introduction, all of the articles begin as did the convention, with the contest of the two New York delegations. This says Altman, was a struggle of "two philosophies. One, a compromising, tired, and besmirched 'socialism,' \* \* \* the other the vigorous, militant socialism of the left wing." Levenstein likewise explains, "the issue between them was clear," it was "the philosophy of Socialism through press releases" versus "the philosophy of Socialism through struggle."

These are two astonishing conversions. For, while many revolutionary Socialists insisted that the conflict should be a principled one and while the speakers of the Old Guard persistently attempted to bait the Militant New Yorkers into a discussion of these principles, Altman's and Levenstein's delegation refused to be led astray! Principles were not to be discussed when there was a question of vote-getting.

That an organizational victory should be labeled a principled one by some of the very people responsible for having refused to make it so, is like having your pie and eating it. Kantorovitch exposes this at great length, concluding, "it must be clearly understood that this was a victory not of one concept of Socialism over another, but solely of the principle of Party democracy and democratic centralization."

#### After the Seating

Whatever there is to be said about the conduct of the left wing in the fight to seat its New York delegation, however, it may be interpreted as an incorrect but well-intentioned means to the necessary end of beating the Old Guard. Not so for its behavior after New York was seated. Now that the imminent danger was over, here was the real opportunity for asserting themselves. And this they did, according to Altman: "These delegates fought for a more centralized and therefore disciplined Party, and always put the interest of the Party as a whole above their sectional interests." While this may not seem a spectacular method of asserting oneself, Levenstein's account is even more, negative and indeed anti-climactic: "Young but not rash, impetuous but not reckless, they turned to face the problems before the Party. With right wing elements in their midst on the one hand, and ultra leftist forces on the other, they directed their energies toward . . ." (I pause in anticipation) ". . . maintaining the all-inclusiveness of their ranks"! There seems to be some disagreement here as to exactly what the left wing WAS doing after the credentials scrap. Kantorovitch has his own explanation: "It seems that after the victory over the Old Guard the left wing disappeared as an organized force in the convention."

Let us see what Altman says to bear out his contention that the left wing asserted itself on organizational questions at least. For the organization report he has nothing but passing praise. Apparently the complete capitulation before the Washington State right wingers, who refused to accept the jurisdiction of a nationally appointed western states committee was a "fight for a more centralized Party." For the constitution committee report he has considerable criticism as has Kantorovitch (Levenstein doesn't mention it). But the fact that he opposes it AFTER the convention, does not mean that the LEFT WING opposed it AT the convention. It did no such thing, Kantorovitch points out. So where was the "fight for a centralized Party?"

#### The Labor Committee

However the major problem of discipline and centralization has been posed as one of organizing Socialist leagues within the unions—to which accomplishment New York can and does point with pride. This was to be the real test. What happened? On the labor committee, Gross, representing New York, was defeated in his proposal to advocate Socialist leagues, and DECLINED TO BRING OUT A MINORITY REPORT. Is this "fighting"? The committee's report did, however, call for compulsory local coordinating labor committees. Biemiller of Wisconsin, a Militant, moved an amendment from the floor to make the committee voluntary! AND THE AMENDMENT WAS ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE! Certainly THIS is not fighting.

"We are," says Kantorovitch, "just where we were

before." And then he makes his first mistake. "I do not for a moment believe," he goes on to say, "that the left wing was for the amendment." That word "for" is hard to define, but if the left wingers, struck suddenly dumb, did not approve the amendment, then Biemiller who made it, Gross who accepted it, and Altman and Levenstein who review Gross's action sympathetically, are all apparently exceptions. The Party, they imply, was not ready to accept such a revolutionary step. This was a reason for not taking the amendment to a vote and allowing the convention to decide!

Two years from now will be time. As Levenstein explains, the Party will "learn from the experience during the next two years of the locals that set up such committees." Are these committees, then, something new? Well, Altman is more exact, if less effective. He says "two MORE years."

For anyone to say that the left wing "fought for a more centralized, and therefore more disciplined Party," may be good wishful thinking, but it's not "evaluation" by a long shot.

#### The Election Platform

Now we come to the question of revolutionary ideology, "the philosophy of Socialism through struggle." None of the three articles deals with the election platform, which was the main point of criticism of the convention in this magazine's lead editorial last month. Presumably discussion is restrained out of fear lest such criticism extending beyond Party boundaries might hurt the campaign.

But our general impression of the convention requires a complete picture and what took place at the Platform Committee's report is of great significance. Levenstein states that "a political united front with the Communist Party for the 1936 elections had already been rejected by a unanimous convention, determined to wage a revolutionary Socialist campaign." This means, if anything, that the convention, recognizing an election campaign as primarily an occasion for educating the masses, wanted to run the campaign on the basis of a full Socialist program, which obviously cannot be made identical with the full Communist program, even assuming that they have one left. This is perfectly correct.

But what happened to the full Socialist program? If any political group adopted our present platform as its full ideology, we would not hesitate to brand it as vague and confused, to say the least. Is it all right for us, then, to go about sowing that very vagueness and confusion among the masses of America by means of our platform? I do not wish to do the left wing an injustice here. An inch-by-inch fight WAS made on the election platform, with numerous unsuccessful amendments. The most important of these, the now-famous Whitten Amendment giving some idea of what our goal is, received the support of virtually the entire left wing. Perhaps the biggest scandal of the convention was that New York voted with the right wing against it and caused its defeat.

#### The Declaration of Principles

The first thing the resolutions committee reported on was the Declaration of Principles. For this it had amendments which, Altman says, "strengthened and clarified it." Levenstein describes them as "a few clarifying changes." These changes occurred precisely at points which the Old Guard had raised objection to. Kantorovitch also calls them "clarifying," but he puts the word into quotation marks. The revisions were made, "to appease the Old Guard," he says plainly. Altman points to the fact that the right wingers failed to criticize the revised Declaration as an example of their complete defeat and bankruptcy. Has he forgotten the old adage that silence means assent?

Other resolutions mentioned are the War Resolution, on the excellence of which all three agree, the one on armed insurrection, to which I shall return shortly, the Farmer-Labor Party, and the United Front. In reviewing the disagreement on the Labor Party both Altman and Levenstein seem to regard the minority of the left wing as representing a psychological rather than political attitude, caused by a reaction of the Minnesota Socialists against the Olson machine. Psychoanalysis of opponents is not a method of discussion; one would prefer to see some answer to the minority ARGUMENTS, rather than an exhibition of hostility, evinced by Altman, or of critical sympathy, shown by Levenstein, toward the minority members. In addition, "localizing" the minority in Minnesota, when it was spread throughout the mid-west, south, and west coast, is not exactly fair.

#### Omissions and Evasions

These are the resolutions that WERE introduced. There were a host of other vital questions which should concern any party with the least pretense at being revolutionary. Can it be that a Party which seeks leadership over the working class of a nation, cannot even formulate an opinion on the People's Front, the world crisis, American imperialism and the colonial struggles in Latin America, the Negro question, the Soviet Union, the International? One of the reasons given is that there was less time than anticipated AT THE CONVENTION. This is just another way of saying that the resolutions were not formulated IN ADVANCE; that nobody gave advance thought to the question of continuing the left wing struggle after the Old Guard was out.

Kantorovitch is the only one of our analysts who seems to imply this. Altman and Levenstein do not notice it.

Some of these omissions may be the result of a lack of a sense of values. But several missing resolutions defy such an explanation. Certainly nobody was not keenly aware of the timeliness of the People's Front question. The only possible reason that no resolution on the subject was formulated by the committee was a desire to evade the issue. Other evasions took the form of negative resolutions. This has come to be such an accepted procedure in the movement that nobody notices it. Even the War Resolution is largely negative, as Kantorovitch fails to note, and gives us as its main constructive program a set of legislative demands! Not a thing, in a Socialist resolution, about our basic anti-war strategy before and during wartime.

#### "Armed Insurrection"

But there is no question that the War Resolution does say a great deal that has to be said, even negatively. This is in marked distinction to the resolution on "armed insurrection." Altman apparently includes it in his "strengthening" amendments to the Declaration of Principles, but does not mention it specifically. Levenstein tries to make it appear less ridiculous by calling it a "repudiation of putschism." But Kantorovitch tears it apart, reveals its meaninglessness and concludes: "Putschism has been condemned not only by revolutionary Socialists but even by Communists. It therefore is simply

a waste of time to reject what has never been accepted. In any case the added section does not in any way clarify the Declaration of Principles. It only raises anew the problem of the road to power, which it certainly has not settled."

This "resolution" is a sort of caricature of the convention. It was written by a left winger. It was written in order to appease the right wing, and evades the issue it is supposed to clarify. And, not even content with imagining the "resolution" as a necessary evil into which they were forced, many left wingers actually delight in it as if it were a great victory.

From their different approaches, the convention critics arrive at different conclusions. Kantorovitch puts it rather brutally: "The one real achievement of the convention of which the left wing may be proud is the resolution on war. Outside of this resolution the left wing seems not to have introduced or fought for anything."

Altman's conclusions do not bear the faintest resemblance to this. For him the left wing was not only "unified theoretically" but "came to the convention with a positive program." He is satisfied with its accomplishments.

Kantorovitch therefore sees the need for "reeducating the Party membership along the lines of revolutionary Socialism." To Altman that job appears completed or at any rate secondary; what is needed now, he sums up, is "Comrades, to work!"

#### "Ultra-Leftism!"

He has a right to his own opinion. But when he begins to declare that people who do not agree with it cannot be left wingers he is overstepping the bounds of reason. And that is exactly what he has done. For in this article, while describing the forces at the convention, he suddenly announces to the public that a certain section of the Militants are not Militants at all but "ultra-leftists" and that they cannot be considered under the same heading as the Militants. Who decided this? Was it the left wing of the Mid-West and the West Coast, where Altman's "ultra-leftists" are located? No. Was it even the left wing in the East, where Altman is located, which suddenly decided to settle the West's affairs to his satisfaction? No, it was not.

Altman, in a singlehanded *tour de force*, simply tracked down the ultra leftists, lodged charges against them, found them guilty, convicted them, and executed them! Fortunately the prisoners were not present for the ceremony.

However, the thing cannot be too lightly dismissed. It was entirely uncalled for, to say the least. Levenstein's repetition of the reference to "ultra-leftists" in his own article does not help either.

In the face of this, Ernest Erber's appeal for national left-wing unity in this magazine last month, was of the utmost importance. Let me close with a final quote from Kantorovitch: "The Cleveland Convention has shown that a left wing is now even more necessary than before. \* \* \* We missed our opportunity at Cleveland. Let us not repeat our mistakes."

#### INDIANA COMRADES TO HOLD INSTITUTE

WHAT promises to be a highly interesting and educational gathering will be held at Indianapolis, Ind. on August 22-23. John Thurber, Maynard Krueger, John West, Merrill Jackson, Roy Lancaster and Albert Goldman will lead in discussions covering the most important problems confronting the Socialist party.

The Mid-West Revolutionary Socialist Institute is a continuation of the Socialist Call Institute conducted last year by the comrades of Indiana. For information as to registration fees and accommodations write to ROY LANCASTER, Socialist party of Indiana, 29 S. Delaware, Indianapolis, Ind.

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