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the Elections  
and the  
People's Front*

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EARL BROWDER

THE RESULTS OF THE  
ELECTIONS AND THE  
PEOPLE'S FRONT

Report delivered December 4, 1936  
to the Plenum of the Central Committee  
of the Communist Party of the U.S.A.

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# Introduction

**T**WO features today typify the world situation and give point to all of the life and death issues facing the people of all lands. One is the situation in Spain, where the concentrated forces of world fascism wage their desperate and bloody war of extermination against democracy, against an embattled people heroically laying down their lives to defend the principles of self-government and progress. The other feature is the Congress of Soviets which has just had presented to it the new Stalinist Constitution representing the high mark of human progress throughout all history. We see Soviet democracy reaching into the daily life of 170,000,000 people, firmly buttressed in a socialist economy which for the first time translates the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness into terms of the guaranteed right to work, to education and to leisure for every citizen.

The world is divided more openly and consciously than at any previous time into two camps, with the prospect of a new world war more immediate and menacing than would ever have been thought possible before without general hostilities. This is universally recognized. Our reactionary capitalist newspapers are explaining to us that this is the division of the world between communism and fascism, and they call for a new camp, presumably to be composed of the Americas, opposed to the two sides that divide Europe and the other con-



7  
1

tinents. But this slogan that the issue is communism or fascism, varied at times to socialism or fascism, or Marxism or fascism, hides the most essential fact. The fascist nations rally to their active support the most reactionary circles within all the non-fascist countries and prepare civil war therein, while the Soviet Union, the land of socialism, led by the Communist Party, rallies all the anti-fascist, peace-loving nations and all progressive circles in all lands to the defense of democracy, progress and peace.

All countries outside the Soviet Union are fields of bitter struggle for dominance between the forces of democracy and fascism. In Germany, Italy, Japan and their satellites, reaction and fascism are ascendant and carry on civil war against the people through the government. They are rapidly extending their domestic aggression across frontiers to other lands: Italy in Ethiopia, Japan in China, Germany and Italy in Spain. They are driving toward a world war for imperialist conquest and against the democratic rights of the peoples of the world and their national independence.

In France the rise of the People's Front halted fascism at home and threw French governmental influence on the side of peace and progress, although the serious hesitations of the Blum government became constantly more dangerous. French fascism was stopped but not routed and threatens to make a new offensive.

In Britain a reactionary administration, playing with sympathy to the fascist offensive,

*In how much  
less the Blum  
Front being  
supported  
opposed by  
own history.*

is able to continue such policies through democratic forms, despite the anti-fascist tendencies of the British population, due to the ineptness of the Labor Party leadership and its failure to fight for a consistent peace policy. The first decisive struggles to determine the predominant position in the international line-up are now maturing. I must mention that great item of international news which every day occupies from five to ten pages in the daily newspapers, the constitutional crisis in Great Britain. I hope you will pardon me if I do not go into the details of the love affairs of King Edward. But it is of the utmost importance when we see the greatest empire of the world, on the territories of which the sun never sets, shaken by the affairs of the heart of two people. British imperialism boasted of its solidity, its unshakableness and indeed had impressed all of us with the absence after long years of crisis of serious inner disturbances. British imperialism until a few years ago boasted that it did not even need to arm its police to keep its starving workers in perfect order. But today the British Empire is shaken by the love affair of its King. Of course all of this romantic nonsense which the masses are fed covers something very real, very significant and very dangerous for the world situation. All of this is the development to the rapidly approaching struggles in Britain to decide which side England is going to be on in the next world war. And the fact that the struggle around the King has become so sharp and shaken the whole empire should prove to us, if it doesn't to those who read the news stories, that this affair is not about the domestic arrangements of Edward

VIII, but about the disposition of guns and ships and airplanes, and the destiny of the peoples of the British Empire.

Now let us turn to the conference of the American republics now going on in Buenos Aires. It shows how sharply the whole world now feels the coming war and begins to take up an attitude toward the basic issues. The speech made by Secretary of State Hull, at the Inter-American Peace Conference, is of great significance. It was a contribution to the mobilization of the anti-fascist forces of the world in the struggle against war, for the maintenance of peace, not only in the Americas, but everywhere. With the fascists on the offensive everywhere, with these fascist forces growing bolder and becoming very arrogant in some of the South American republics represented in Buenos Aires, it is no small thing when the bourgeois spokesman for the United States government makes an appeal to the peoples of the world to organize people's peace movements to control their governments.

On this first plank of Secretary Hull we can declare our complete agreement. And we can welcome such a call which will be heard and listened to by the peoples of every country where they are not absolutely cut off by fascist dictatorship. Even there it will penetrate and find a response. There are, of course, points in Secretary Hull's program where we will have to register some differences of opinion as when he puts forward the plank of American neutrality as the key to peace. We know the falseness of neutrality. We know how it has played into the hands of the war-makers in America and throughout the world. But even on this point

*C.P. Comment  
by M. Halperin  
in the Nation  
Jan. 26, 1937*



we have to note some progress in the direction of a real peace policy in Hull's speech. The neutrality that he put forward is not the simple neutrality of the past, of withdrawal from world affairs, of isolation. It begins to have a new content, not clearly defined as yet, but containing within it the possibilities of developments toward an active peace policy for America which will strengthen the peace forces throughout the world.

The program as laid down by Secretary Hull is very tentative and is not yet crystallized. As it becomes crystallized, we will, of course, find many points in which we have to distinguish our position very sharply. But the main significance of this speech is that America is more and more emerging as the greatest power of the capitalist world on the side of peace, and against the fascist war-makers, and that in this position there is already an appeal to the masses of the people for organized support, not only governmental support, but mass support in every country to the struggle for peace.

The tremendous world significance of the present struggle in Spain arises from its position as focus point for the whole world struggle. Fascism had counted Spain as one of its conquests. The democratic victory of the establishment of a Spanish Republic was thought to have been smashed and subverted from within due to the disunity of the democratic forces. But the call for the People's Front to defeat fascism issued by the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International was greeted with mass response in Spain, second only, if not equal, to that in France. The fascists were overwhelmingly defeated in the Spanish elec-

100  
optimistic!

tions of February, 1936. The People's Front was victorious and established itself in control of the government. Fascism had lost Spain. It launched the murderous uprising against Spanish democracy in July, with the inspiration and support of Hitler and Mussolini, as a desperate attempt to recover its lost position. The international fascist intervention in Spain is the first point of the general world war being prepared by fascism against democracy everywhere.

The chief task of the day for all of progressive humanity is the support of Spanish democracy. In Spain, while we are meeting, we see new victories for the People's Front forces and at the same time we get the news of the landing of large-scale armies of invasion from Germany and Italy. I don't think I have to emphasize to this meeting the significance of this, what it means for our tasks in carrying out the campaign in support of Spain, everywhere in America. We cannot permit the invasion of fascist forces in Spain to throw the tide of battle against Spanish democracy. More than ever now, we must bring international assistance for the Spanish people in every form, and America is one of the places that has to stand in the front ranks of this solidarity action for Spain.

There are a few Americans who are now in the fighting lines in and around Madrid and in the air forces there, and in the machine shops that are keeping the machinery of war going for the People's Front. Many more are eager to go and they should be encouraged and assisted. We must understand that in the struggle for support of Spain we can now reach



out into the ranks of every circle in America which has any firm democratic convictions. There are many people ready to fight for democracy and to go to Spain today. As Communists we urge them to do so and fight for the cause of all humanity.

It is on this world stage, the setting of which is characterized chiefly by Spain, with the Soviet Union completing its own democratic achievements while leading the world forces in support of Spanish democracy, with the fascist governments ever more openly subsidizing and supporting fascist intervention, with all the world forced to align itself on one side or the other openly or tacitly; it is on this world stage that we must evaluate the recently concluded elections and must mark out the next steps in the struggle for democracy, progress and peace in the United States.

## ONE

# The Defeat of Reaction in the November Elections

AT THE Ninth Convention of our Party in June, in charting our course for the elections, we established that, first, the Republican Party represented nationally the point of concentration of the most reactionary forces in America, moving toward fascism and war. The task was to defeat this threat at all costs. Secondly, Roosevelt, heading the Democratic Party, stood for a middle of the road course. The support of the organized labor and progressive movement went to Roosevelt, as the practical alternative to aggressive reaction. It became our task to teach this progressive and labor movement not to rely upon Roosevelt, to secure independent political organization and action, to win all possible concessions from Roosevelt while using this campaign to prepare its future complete independence in a Farmer-Labor Party. Thirdly, the Communist Party, necessarily conducting an independent campaign, was the most active, loyal and clearheaded leader of the whole camp of labor, progress and peace. Its special task, while influencing the broadest masses and the practical electoral decisions, was to maintain its role independent of the capitalist parties, and extend widely its roots of sympathetic connection with the masses

of workers, farmers and lower middle classes and their organizations.

These three objectives represent a specific American application of the strategy of the People's Front, formulated on a world scale at the Seventh World Congress. You will recall that we in America also helped prepare that Congress decision by our movement for the Labor Party in 1935. I want to recall to you a statement of Comrade Dimitroff in his report to the Seventh World Congress, where he said:

"And what would the success of fascism in the United States entail? For the toiling masses it would, of course, entail the unrestrained strengthening of the regime of exploitation and the destruction of the working class movement. And what would be the international significance of this success of fascism? As we know, the United States is not Hungary, or Finland, or Bulgaria, or Latvia. The success of fascism in the United States would change the whole international situation quite materially."

Comrade Dimitroff, after thus evaluating what fascism in the United States would mean to the entire world, in another place went on to expose the source of incipient fascism in the United States:

"One must be indeed a confirmed addict of the use of hackneyed schemes not to see that the most reactionary circles of American finance capital, which are attacking Roosevelt, represent first and foremost the very force which is stimulating and organizing the fascist movement in the United States. Not to see the beginnings of real fascism in the

United States behind the hypocritical outpouring of these circles 'in defense of the democratic rights of the American citizen' is tantamount to misleading the working class in the struggle against its worst enemy."

This warning was directed against such people as the leaders of the Socialist Party and their policies. They failed to realize the significance of this fascist danger, and, hence, in the elections, found themselves cut off from the masses and headed for a harmful sectarian isolation.

We learned in this election campaign what deep truth there was in these statements by Comrade Dimitroff. After the Seventh Congress we said that the far-reaching and world-shaping consequences in the People's Front strategy would become clear only as they unfolded in the life of the people of the world. We called for a continued and sustained study of the Seventh Congress decisions and their consequences. The victories of the People's Front in France and Spain confirmed this estimate. Now we must add that the elections in the United States in their own and different way also confirmed the correctness of the Seventh Congress decisions.

*electoral,  
and with  
some "outside  
consolidation  
workers'  
forces. Not  
complete  
victory!*

The best possible confirmation of the correctness of a strategy is its successful execution, and the realization of the expected results. To what degree did the masses of the people achieve the objectives we set for the election?

The first objective was the defeat of London. This was accomplished to a degree far surpassing all expectations. There was a crushing rebuke to the Republican Party such



as no major party had experienced in generations. It must be clear that the more overwhelming the defeat of the Landon camp, the more did we achieve our political objective which was more than merely keeping Landon out of office. It was to discredit and drive out of public life all who stood on such a platform before the American people. This aim we shared with the largest number of people, which proved to be the great majority of the population. Without exaggerating our role in bringing about this result, we can safely say that the weight of each individual Communist in the struggle was far higher, manifold, than that of the members of any other political group in America.

The second objective was to make the campaign and the re-election of Roosevelt serve also to prepare and strengthen the forces of the Farmer-Labor Party and the People's Front. This aim was achieved in varying degree in the various parts of the country, with some advance almost everywhere. We Communists, by our policy and activity, helped bring about these advances in every case, in many instances in a most significant degree. Outstanding examples of these are: (a) the smashing victory of the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party not only over the Republicans, but also over the Democrats where their candidates stayed in the race; (b) the victory of the Wisconsin Progressive Party, and, more important, the strengthened position within it of the Farmer-Labor Progressive Association, with the appearance of Communists and definite Left wingers among the elected officials; (c) the electoral successes of the Washington Commonwealth Federation,



a People's Front movement just emerging out of the Democratic Party, moving toward a Farmer-Labor Party; (d) the united political action movement in California which united the EPIC movement with labor and Left-wing organizations, and which maintained the positions in State Legislature and Congress originally won in 1934; (e) the American Labor Party in New York, which, notwithstanding serious weaknesses and shortcomings, advanced the People's Front and gathered more than one-quarter million votes under its own banner, giving its support to Roosevelt not through the Democratic Party; (f) Labor's Non-Partisan League, although only a beginning and very timid step forward to independent political action, represented distinct progress over the traditional A. F. of L. attitude, and was a step in the direction of a Farmer-Labor Party. In these examples and in other mass movements of perhaps less significance we find some indication of the general advance that was achieved in the election campaign toward building the foundation of a People's Front.

We have no reason to exaggerate these achievements, beyond their true proportions. They are limited and full of weaknesses. Yet they are of enormous importance as representative of those movements toward the People's Front, the further development of which gives the only hope of preventing reaction and fascism from seizing America. The problem of further extending, developing and uniting this movement on a national scale is the central problem of the day.

On the third objective, that of building the Party, we should note that even by the narrow-

est standard of measurement, the vote for the Communist ticket, which circumstances this year removed from all direct relation to the scope of our influence, shows considerable growth except on the Presidential ticket, which will probably show a slight decline. An example of this is the growth of the vote in New York City to 65,000 for the general ticket, topping the Socialist vote of 60,000 for the first time. That there was a distinct advance of Communist Party influence has been generally admitted.

We must come to the conclusion, therefore, that life itself, and the results of the struggle, have given proof of the full correctness of our Party's strategy, a strategy which brought us fully into the main stream of American political life and made our small Party a significant factor not merely for ourselves but for the whole country.

Our Party's significant role was made possible by our understanding of the deep class currents in American politics. When we speak of our Party's achievements, we by no means conceive of them as exploits of wonder-workers who sucked these results out of their own thumbs. Our Party's role was important because we knew the currents among the masses. We placed ourselves in a position, not merely to ride these currents, but to co-operate with them and increasingly to guide them. It was the movement of the masses which was the force that changed the whole face of American politics.

Let us try to get a closer idea of the nature of the change in the political structure of the parties that took place, making the Republican

and Democratic parties something different from what they were before. For generations the two-party system of American capitalism was based upon a regionalism that roughly corresponded to basic economic groups. These were the industrial banking North, the cotton-tobacco South, the wheat-dairy-livestock-mining West. The party struggle was largely between the bourgeoisie of these three regions for their special interests. They brought forward such issues in addition as were considered necessary to undermine the mass following of the rival group, or to whip up their own supporters to greater enthusiasm. With Republicans as the party of Northern capitalism, and Democrats that of the special agrarianism of the South, the basic problem of their conflict was always which of them would win the allegiance of the West. This regionalism was accentuated by the federal system of governmental structure, with its 48 sovereign states. The basic class antagonisms rarely broke through this superstructure to find any clear expression in the parties and issues in national politics.

If this traditional structure of the two-party system had remained intact, there is little doubt that the *Literary Digest* straw ballot would have been as prophetic in 1936 as it had been in four previous Presidential elections. The *Literary Digest* came to disaster because it overlooked one little fact; the dominant line of political groupings was no longer the vertical one of regionalism, but the horizontal one of class stratification. Because their sample votes were taken overwhelmingly among the upper classes—automobile owners and telephone subscribers



—they reflected the general current of these classes toward Landon and the Republicans, but overlooked the contrary current among the poorer strata in the opposite direction.

Class groupings came forward as the decisive factor in the 1936 elections, sweeping over and submerging the old regional traditions and interests. That is one of the chief reasons for Roosevelt's sweeping majority. The speed with which this took place, its extent which left out only Maine and Vermont (the stagnant extreme Northeast), its volume with a majority of 11,000,000—all these indicate that this change is not accidental or temporary, but a permanent new direction of American political life.

This regrouping on class lines came to the fore on the initiative taken by the big monopolists, in the organization of the notorious Liberty League, and the subsequent mobilization of the American Bankers' Association, the United States Chamber of Commerce, the National Manufacturers' Association, and all similar bodies under the direct control of Wall Street. Their policy was directed toward shelving Roosevelt and his policies in favor of the Republican candidate—any Republican, they thought, could be elected by them. They were even agreed, as their reactionary literary servant, Mencken, expressed it, that a Chinaman could beat Roosevelt with all that money-power behind him. But the masses, although stirring with discontent against Roosevelt's policies, took fright at this unprecedented concentration of all their most pitiless exploiters, and rallied around Roosevelt to defeat Wall Street. When the fascist Hearst added his voice to that hymn of hate the issue became

*class vs regional groupings*  
*But this was not present in the campaign*

quite definite for the masses. Roosevelt's victory was won for him in the first place by the character of his enemies. Their campaign of hatred was his greatest political asset, as he himself recognized in his Madison Square Garden speech.

Equally significant was the negative influence of the daily newspapers in the elections. The big majority of them actively supported Landon, estimates running from 65 per cent to 85 per cent. The remainder, with few exceptions, were lukewarm in their support and full of reservations. The more the newspapers turned against Roosevelt, the more the masses turned toward him. They had learned that newspapers represented and spoke for their worst enemies and oppressors.

The unprecedented "Red scare" that was staged against Roosevelt also strengthened the sentiment of the masses in his favor. Of course, no one could seriously credit the cries of "Communist", "revolution", "Moscow", "red flag", and so on, that filled the air for weeks. When for a full week the newspapers debated whether it was really true that the Communists asked their followers to vote for Roosevelt, they succeeded in doing more than diverting a few hundred thousand votes away from us in his direction. They also convinced millions, already alarmed, that this typical Hitler-Hearst trick stamped the dominant features of the Landon camp as fascist. Thus the great mass of anti-fascist sentiment was directed to Roosevelt. The defeat of almost every Red-baiting candidate in the election was one of its major features. Red-baiters lost out no matter what group they operated within. Another typical



trait of the Landon campaign which confirmed mass opinion of its fascist direction was its demagogic and contradictory promises of all things to all men.

Roosevelt also gathered to his support the mass peace sentiments prevalent among the people. Without putting forward any definite peace program, he could still shine in comparison with Landon, whose jingoist tendencies were emphasized by the support of the munition lords and warmongers generally for his candidacy.

Another boomerang for Landon was the Republican attack upon the weaknesses of the Social Security Act, and the attempt to enter into competition with Roosevelt in promises. The result was to press Roosevelt into making his Madison Square Garden speech with his pledge for shorter hours, higher wages, an end to sweatshops and child labor, collective bargaining through trade unions, and his slogan that "for all these things we have only just begun to fight". These promises aroused the enthusiasm and support of the workers, where Roosevelt's record during his first term had left them cold or indifferent. Again the Roosevelt majority was swelled and given even more the character of a class line-up, of a crusade against Wall Street and reaction.

The election results discredited and drove from public life, at least temporarily, the fascist radio priest, Father Coughlin. For a time the Union Party looked formidable, when it promised to unite the agrarian following of Lemke, the old-age pension movement of Dr. Townsend, the followers of the radio priest, Father Coughlin, and the remnants of the

Huey Long Share-the-Wealth movement under Rev. Gerald K. Smith. For a short while it succeeded in penetrating state-wide Farmer-Labor Parties in Iowa and Michigan, and even seriously threatened to influence the successful Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota.

Only the determined and relentless campaign of exposure and opposition, led and organized in the first place by the Communists, smashed the influence of Lemke and Coughlin in one after another of their strongholds and finally brought them to an inglorious collapse, completely isolating them from the Farmer-Labor movement. They received only a fraction of their expected vote. The Union Party fully justified our judgment of it, as the vanguard for the reactionary campaign, laying the ground for more reactionary slogans, as when Father Coughlin raised the issue of bullets to overthrow a possible "dictatorship" of Roosevelt. Its collapse was of the same general political significance as that of the Republican Party, of which it was an auxiliary.

Negative proof of the correctness of the course of the Communist Party is given by the debacle of the Socialist Party. The Socialist Party took a diametrically opposite course to our line on every tactic. Demoralized by the bankruptcy of opportunist Social-Democracy in Europe, the Socialist Party still rejected the proposals of the Communist Party for a united front, came out in principle against the People's Front in America and advocated its liquidation in France and Spain. It tried to find a new course, by submitting to the poisonous influence of Trotskyism and by amalgamating with the Trotskyites. The Socialist

Party opposed and tried to disrupt the Farmer-Labor Parties in the various states, it denounced Labor's Non-Partisan League, it declared that the only issue of importance was the immediate transition to socialism, but for this Left-sounding slogan gave a most reformist interpretation. By this course the Socialist Party played into the hands of its Right-wing elements and came to an unprincipled split with its local organizations, which had somewhat of a mass base in Connecticut and Pennsylvania; it split with the New York Old Guard which had trade union connections; and only saved a split in Wisconsin by making that state an "exception" which resulted in the practical liquidation of the Socialist Party into the Farmer-Labor Progressive Federation. Its course brought about the public resignation from the Socialist Party of many members prominent in trade union work and the withdrawal of others from practical politics, both of Right and Left tendencies. Its whole campaign was a frantic grasping for votes for itself at all costs, but it failed of this aim more completely than ever in its history. The total vote will be only 20 per cent of that of four years ago and less than half of the Socialist Party vote in 1900, when it made its first national campaign.

The Socialist Party is, as a result of its sectarian course, its opportunist and inept campaign, now in a deep crisis, with its lower organizations ravaged by the bitter factional struggle for complete control being waged by the Trotskyites. We must offer to all sincere Socialists our sympathetic help in solving their difficult problems.



## What Follows After the Roosevelt Victory

**N**OW, let us pass on to a consideration of what follows after the Roosevelt victory. The balloting on Nov. 3 could be called "the great repudiation". The large majority of people were first of all voting against Hearst, against the Liberty League, against Wall Street, against Landon, against reaction, fascism and jingoism. That is the first and most important significance of the elections. It was a smashing defeat for reaction. But, though defeated, the forces of reaction were not routed. They are reforming their lines for new attacks, preparing new methods to gain the same ends they sought in the election. Forced to drop their plans to challenge the validity of the election, which they clearly had in mind in expectation of a close vote, the reactionaries, faced with a tremendous majority for Roosevelt, suddenly turned an about face and began to make love to Roosevelt. Hearst, who the day before election denounced him in the same terms as he does the Communists, against whom he incites lynch law, suddenly found in Roosevelt the qualities of an Andrew Jackson of the twentieth century.

If Roosevelt wants support from them, the reactionaries tell the world, he can get all he



wants, for a "sane" policy that will curb the "wild men" who got into Congress in the landslide, in far too large numbers for reactionary comfort. The defeated reactionaries hoped to recoup their fortunes through the Democratic Right wing, through influencing Roosevelt, through splitting the Democratic Party, and through the Supreme Court.

The Communist Party sees in the overwhelming defeat of reaction in the elections a great opportunity for the forces of the People's Front to move forward, for labor to achieve some of its demands, for all of the oppressed to win improvements in their situation. But this cannot be done if we sit and wait for someone to bring things to us on a platter. It will not happen if the masses rely upon Roosevelt. Progress can only come if we use the opportunity for organization and struggle on a broader and more determined line than ever before.

Evidence that millions of workers understand this point is to be seen in the rising movement in various industries, in marine, steel, clothing, textile and others. These workers knew that now is the favorable time to gain demands, but that without organization and struggle nothing will happen. There is a mounting mood of confidence and readiness to struggle. This is the mood that must be roused, stimulated and organized to drive the whole movement forward for the People's Front.

Of course, the Democratic Party leaders and Roosevelt want nothing of the kind. They want everyone to be quiet and wait for whatever the new Congress will bring them. The Demo-

Parsons  
at the strike - all  
is done until the  
next time!!

cratic Party wants to restore good relations with its extreme Right wing and with the reactionaries generally and still continue to absorb all Farmer-Labor Party sentiment and prevent its crystallization.

The A. F. of L. Executive Council, instead of leading the labor movement forward, pulls back and condemns even such hesitant efforts as Labor's Non-Partisan League and the C. I. O.'s steel drive. It is ready to split the whole labor movement rather than permit progress.

The C. I. O. unions, while moving forward for industrial organization, are marking time politically, waiting for new developments instead of helping bring them about. The statement of Labor's Non-Partisan League after the elections sounded only the call to be alert and to be ready for a possible realignment in 1940, but there was not a word about helping create this realignment. We can by no means agree with this passive attitude but must point out that it is an obstacle to progress.

The employing class is naturally aware of the mounting spirit for struggle of the masses and they are trying to head it off. That is the significance of the large number of voluntary pay increases that have been announced since the elections.

Only the organization and struggle of the masses, independent of capitalist parties and politicians, will realize their demands and expectations, through Congress and outside of Congress, and prepare the way for greater concessions later on.

True, the masses have "great expectations", as the *New York Times* expressed it, as a re-

sult of the defeat of reaction. They believed in the promises made to them. They expect higher wages and lower hours, with protection of the right of collective bargaining and trade union organization. They expect adequate relief and public works to care for the eleven million unemployed; and they are in the mood for sharp struggle to achieve these. They expect the improvement of the old-age pensions and social security law, and their extension to the whole population. They expect the wiping out of sweat-shops and child labor. The Negroes expect some of the equality that Ickes talked to them about. The farmers expect more relief from their burdens. The young people expect further help from the government. The masses expect a curb to be placed on the usurped powers of the Supreme Court. They expect the United States to take an active part in preserving peace in the world. They expect greater civil liberties.

All of these great expectations constitute the mandate given to Roosevelt by the overwhelming majority of his 27,000,000 supporters. It is these great expectations which must be transformed into the moving force for the creation of the People's Front and the independent struggle and organization to realize these things.

The crushing defeat of the Republicans hastened the disintegration of the old two-party system. It brought closer the growing split of the Democratic Party, the party which united progressive and reactionary elements in the election, elements which cannot long continue in the same party. It strengthened all the progressive tendencies among the voting population. All these things improve and broaden the prospects for the building of the People's



Front. We can say that these prospects are much better than ever before.

But at the same time, while improving and broadening the prospects for a national Farmer-Labor Party, this very progress brings about a temporary delay in the organizational unity of all these forces in a definite national organization. Now more than ever there is a fear among many progressives of prematurely forming such a party and thereby narrowing it down, leaving behind and outside serious forces which can be brought in a little later or in a different form.

We want to hasten the formation of a national Farmer-Labor Party as much as possible. It was the absence of such a party in the last elections which seriously held back the growth of labor's power. Even the national application of the tactic of the American Labor Party in New York would have been a great advance. The closest thing we got to a national concentration of the Farmer-Labor Party forces was the valuable but very limited Chicago Conference of May 30. This produced no effective organization but only a platform. The Chicago platform alone, however, by its stimulating effect on all local movements, proved the tremendous role that can and will be played by a really effective national united front of all the progressive movements and organizations. That is what we have in mind when we call for a national Farmer-Labor Party.

We must soberly estimate, however, the moods and trends among the broad progressive ranks. We must find the way to unite the movements already outside of and independent of the Democratic Party and Progressive Republicans together with those that are still



maturing within the old parties, and not yet ready for full independence. This means that we must conceive of the People's Front on a broader scale than merely the existing Farmer-Labor Party organizations. We must conceive of it on a scale that will unite the forces in the Farmer-Labor Party and other progressives together with those forces crystallized in some form or other but not yet independent of the old parties.

Our experience in Washington and California confirms the correctness of this judgment. There is not the slightest doubt that we were correct in establishing the united front of these movements which were not yet independent of the Democratic Party. The struggle to realize the mandate of the elections will still further broaden and crystallize those progressive movements. We cannot, like Norman Thomas, wash our hands of these growing movements and demand that they spring forth overnight fully grown and mature, before we will recognize and work with them. We must be ready to help them through birth pangs and nurture them through all the difficulties of infancy.

There cannot be a blue-print which will answer by formula how the People's Front is to develop uniformly throughout the country. We must study the real forces at work among the people and their relations concretely, and find a way acceptable to these progressive forces which will unite them on a state scale, and later nationally. This broader unity will have to, for a time, at least, include in most places forces outside and inside of the two old parties. This is a necessity at present for the development of the Farmer-Labor Party on a broad mass basis.

Two  
organizations  
People's  
Front to  
be adjusted  
to F-LP

How  
this movement  
develops  
the  
Program

More than ever now, we must emphasize that in the People's Front, and in the existing Farmer-Labor Parties which already realize in part the People's Front, we are not trying to obtain a camouflage for the Socialist and Communist Parties. In the People's Front we must at all costs include non-socialist progressives who will for a longer or shorter time be the overwhelming majority. Our aim in the People's Front is to organize the majority of the people in the shortest possible time, against the worst reactionaries and exploiters, and get the maximum possible control of the government in the hands of this progressive majority. And we must say that the results of the election showed, more than we ever saw before, the possibility of achieving this.

Roosevelt and his close supporters, of course, want to create the impression that the people already have achieved this goal through his reelection. This illusion if not fought against can become an obstacle to the further growth of the People's Front. It will be fully dispersed only in the course of struggle, in independent struggle on the economic and political field to realize the great expectations of the workers; first of all in the industries, in the fight for wages, hours and unionization, and, second, in the legislative assemblies of the states and the national congress in the fight for social and labor legislation.

We do not need to waste time, as some people do, in speculations as to whether Roosevelt will turn Right or Left, although our prediction of a Right turn by Roosevelt as expressed before election is being realized in the administration's relief policy today. From past experience we

know that his course will be determined in its major aspects entirely by the course of the road. Roosevelt always tries to find the middle of the road. If the road turns right he turns right. If the road turns left, he will turn left. The road of national life will be determined not by Roosevelt's mind or tendency, but by the relationship of forces, by the independent struggle of the masses in the economic and political fields. A strong and successful movement to organize the mass production industries will change the course of government and of Roosevelt to the Left more than all the persuasive arguments in the world.

Likewise, we need not be afraid that the workers and farmers will win too much through Roosevelt and will thus dull their appetite for more and make them conservative. We must encourage the masses to win everything possible through the election victory of Roosevelt, showing them that this can only be done through organization and struggle, and through political independence from Roosevelt. We can be quite sure that every gain under these conditions will only sharpen their appetite for more, while having increased their knowledge and their power to gain more.

Neither do we need to speculate on the question as to whether on a national scale the People's Front will be realized only in the form of a Farmer-Labor Party, or through its combination with other forms of organization and struggle of the masses. It is sufficient at this moment to take note of the necessity in many states to work for a time at least also through broader and less definitely crystallized forms than the Farmer-Labor Party. What will finally

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come out on a national scale will to a large degree be determined by the relation of forces within the Roosevelt following, between reactionary and progressive trends and forces. A split in that following is sure to come, but its form on a national scale is still impossible to predict with certainty. In this struggle we will also participate, and we will have many difficult, complicated, and dangerous problems to solve in organizing and influencing the masses in the struggles that take place within the Democratic Party and in some progressive sections of the Republican Party.

Just a word about the economic prospects after the election. We do not need to take time for any extended economic analysis. It is clear that production and economic activity in almost every industry are definitely continuing upward. Production is approaching pre-crisis levels. But the most important fact is that this still leaves a mass of unemployed in America, variously estimated from 9 to 14 million. This, together with the forces always preparing a new collapse, guarantees that this so-called prosperity will not reach even that relative mass of people that it has in previous periods, and that it will be even shorter in duration, independent of the changes that may be brought about by world political developments such as world war.

The election results strengthened the fight for the unity of the working class and of the trade union movement. This is of central importance, for without the firm leadership and hegemony of the working class which can be exercised only through its unity, the broader People's Front cannot be realized.



The fight for working class unity which for us still means the historic task of the organization of the tens of millions of the unorganized workers, and especially the workers in the basic and mass production industries, today confronts us with the special and immediate task of fighting against the spreading of the division in the organized labor movement, of fighting for the re-unification of the American Federation of Labor.

Our Party has throughout the whole of this critical period in the trade union movement thrown its full weight in the fight to maintain the unity of the American Federation of Labor and against the splitting policies of the reactionary leaders of the Executive Council. Now the 56th Convention of the A. F. of L., by its endorsement of the suspensions, has taken a step which increases the threat of a long time split in the trade union movement. We shall redouble our efforts in the fight for trade union unity, for the unity of the American Federation of Labor. The statement of the Central Committee condemning the split, issued immediately after the Tampa Convention had confirmed the suspension of the C.I.O. unions, furnishes the guide for our tasks in this fight.

We must examine in detail the application of this statement to the specific situation and find very carefully the correct line in the complicated problems that will exist in the many industries and in many trade unions. Again we have to say that there is no formula which automatically gives us an answer to these problems. Only careful study of the concrete situation will enable us to find the correct, the most effective, answer in the fight for unity.

But let it be clearly understood that we are not going to be fooled by empty talk about unity. We will always expose, as we have in the past, those who play with the word unity and use it to cover up their reactionary and splitting policies and tactics. There are those who, in the name of unity, would surrender to the reactionaries and compromise or abandon the basic struggle to unite the workers in steel, auto, rubber, chemical, and other mass production industries. Against this false cry of unity, which William Green used so demagogically to demand surrender to reaction at the Tampa Convention, we must unite all progressives in firm solidarity. Practical compromises to adjust the particular claims of particular craft unions to this basic program are, of course, allowable, and no one would think of rejecting them in principle beforehand. But such practical compromises are possible only when the reactionary Executive Council has opened the door for them by abandoning its demand for unconditional surrender of the progressives in their fight for working class unity.

Recently Comrade Dimitroff, in his article on Spain, recalled to our memory the clear, firm words of Lenin on unity which are of great value in connection with this problem to the American trade union movement:

“The workers really need unity. And the thing that must be understood above all else is that apart from the workers themselves, no one will ‘give’ them unity, no one is able to help their unity. Unity must not be ‘promised’—this will be an empty boast, self-deception. Unity must not be ‘made’ out of ‘agreement’ between little groups of intellectuals—this is an error of the saddest, most

naive and ignorant type. Unity must be won, and only by the workers themselves. The conscious workers themselves are capable of achieving this—by stubborn and insistent work.

“Nothing is easier than to write the word ‘unity’ in letters a yard high, to promise unity, to ‘proclaim’ ourselves as adherents of unity. But, in reality, unity can only be advanced by work and the organization of the progressive workers, of all conscious workers. . . .

“This is not so easy. It requires work, insistence, the rallying together of all conscious workers. But without work, the unity of the workers is out of the question.”

So Lenin spoke some twenty years ago about unity, on the eve of the World War. And it is in this spirit that we today fight for working class unity, for the unity of the American Federation of Labor. The fight for genuine trade union unity is a fight for the triumph within the labor movement of the principles enunciated and supported in action by the Committee for Industrial Organization. The establishment of this principle is an absolute necessity for the further growth, for the very existence, finally, of the trade union movement. It is a necessary condition for the preservation of democracy in the United States, for the salvation of our country from reaction, fascism and war. That is why we must say, without the slightest equivocation, that the struggle to realize the principles of the C. I. O. is the first demand upon every progressive as well as every revolutionary worker. It is the struggle for the unity of the working class.

*Demanding*



There can be no real working class unity so long as some 25,000,000 workers, of whom some 10,000,000 are in the mass production industries, are unorganized. This does not in the least mean that we underestimate the importance and significance of the four million organized workers, the most decisive sections of which are in the unions affiliated to the C. I. O. and in the independent railroad brotherhoods.

Can you imagine if we succeeded in the future, and that is our aim, to help organize the entire working class, its decisive sections, in genuine industrial unions, under real progressive labor leadership, how that would change the entire picture of the class relations within the country? What impetus that would give to the independent role of the working class in shaping, formulating and influencing the policies and life of all the people in our great country? That certainly would be a guarantee that the mandate to Roosevelt in the elections would be fulfilled.



## THREE

# The Accomplishments and Shortcomings of the Communist Party

**WE** HAVE already evaluated the main accomplishments of the Party in the previous section of the report. We have seen how our Party strategy proved correct by the results, and by the immensely improved position of the Party in relation to all the progressive forces in the country. We are in conflict only with those forces which are holding back the movement; we have increasingly close cooperation with all forces helping to drive the labor movement forward to new strength and achievements; above all we have deepened and broadened our ties with the masses.

Some comrades are still influenced by the idea that the Party vote is the only correct measure of our achievements. To the degree that they are influenced by this idea they are somewhat pessimistic because our vote did not show any great jump forward. These comrades look upon our refusal to go into head-on collision with the progressive labor movement, in sharp competition for votes, like Norman Thomas did, as a sacrifice necessary to assure that Landon would not be elected. Therefore, they ask us why we did not change our posi-

tion in the last days before election, when it was becoming clear that Roosevelt would be elected. They wonder why we did not swing over to the Thomas tactic of grabbing the utmost possible votes for ourselves at the last minute (even though this failed so signally to win votes for Thomas).

To pose such a question reveals a shallow understanding of our whole strategy and a wrong evaluation of our accomplishments. Let us throw light on this question from another angle. Suppose that our proposals last summer for a National Farmer-Labor Party had been adopted by the progressive movement. Then we would have withdrawn our national ticket entirely. But we would have made an equally energetic campaign without getting any separate Communist Party vote at all as a result. Would our doubting comrades still have kept their eyes fixed on the C. P. vote, this time zero, and feared that we had disappeared entirely from the political scene? Of course not. Clearly, it would have been recognized as a much greater victory. However, the urgent need for a united front, which everyone felt, was realized in another and less satisfactory way under such circumstances that we could not fight against it—the united front of the labor and progressive forces around Roosevelt.

We foresaw, before the campaign opened, that our separate vote would register only our irreducible minimum and not our maximum influence. This was inherent in the situation and our strategy. There is nothing to weep about. We do not have to explain away our vote by special local circumstances or special weaknesses on our part. Weaknesses there were aplenty in our campaign but they must not

be sought in this question of the relation of our influence and our vote. There is no direct relation between them at all. Not to understand this is to have a very narrow understanding of the whole strategy of the People's Front, which is not a mere election tactic but a strategy for a whole period.

Where our strategy was realized in its most satisfactory form—as in Minnesota—we had no state ticket at all, but were among the most effective campaigners for the Farmer-Labor ticket. Does that mean that we were weakened in that state? On the contrary, we made the greatest advance of Communist influence among the masses, precisely there. Equally significant were our advances in Wisconsin which again can in no wise be measured by our separate vote. Even in the very unsatisfactory American Labor Party in New York, with its crude organization from the top alone, there were greater advances of our influence than would have accompanied a situation where the American Labor Party was absent, even though that had meant a higher Communist Party vote. We made greater advances with the lower vote in New York with the American Labor Party in the field than we could have made with a higher vote and the American Labor Party not in existence.

Then, too, we should point out one possible development which was not realized but which might have occurred if the progressive leaders had taken only a part of our advice. Suppose these leaders and their organizations had adopted our proposal for a National Farmer-Labor Party convention, including the Socialists and the Communists. Suppose that this convention had come together and formed a na-



tional Farmer-Labor Party with all of us in it, and then decided to place Roosevelt at the head of the ticket nationally, like the American Labor Party did in New York, but followed it up with state Farmer-Labor Party tickets wherever possible. Under such circumstances would the Socialist Party and the Communist Party have accepted the discipline of such a broad national united front of all progressives? Would we have refrained from putting forward our own independent tickets and supported the Farmer-Labor Party ticket even with Roosevelt at the head? I venture to say that under such conditions we would almost surely have done so. The united People's Front and the cause of socialism as well would have been advanced much more than by what actually happened in the election campaign.

One of the greatest accomplishments of our Party in this campaign was that it began to learn how, even with small forces, to find its road in the midst of the most complicated political situation—we drove in the center of a national political storm toward a definite goal, without ever losing sight of it, and without allowing our forces to be broken up, dispersed or demoralized, but rather gaining strength and clarity out of it all. This ability is the hall mark of Bolshevism and to the degree that our Party demonstrated this ability, we can say that we are in the process of becoming a real Bolshevik Party.

Can any one, even our worst enemies, deny that the Communist Party played an important role in the campaign; that millions of people thought that what the Communist Party had to say was of serious importance, that millions



were influenced in their thinking and their actions by the Communist Party? No one can deny this undisputed fact. Can any one say that we lost our heads at any moment, that we hesitated, or doubted at any point, that our strategical or tactical line was ever blurred or unclear or had to be changed? It is possible to differ with us but it is not possible to say that. Everyone recognized that the Communist Party was an exceptionally effective striking force precisely because of its conviction and clarity. its drive and unity. That is another of the hall marks of Bolshevism.

Can anyone deny that in this campaign the Communist Party broke through and smashed the legend of our enemies that our Party is something foreign, imported from abroad, not organically a part of the American political scene? No one can deny that we thoroughly established our Party as an American Party, that our slogan—"Communism is 20th Century Americanism"—registered deeply with the American people. This was a great achievement. This is also a sign of Bolshevism.

Can anyone deny that in this campaign the Communist Party smashed the conspiracy to outlaw it, to rouse a pogrom spirit in America against the Communists, to drive us out of politics? We forced our Party on the ballot in states that had passed laws designed especially to keep it off. Where, as in Illinois, we were kept off the ballot it was by arbitrary violation of the letter and spirit of the election laws, unreasonable as they were, or as in Florida, where the law now even excludes the Republican Party. When in Terre Haute and Tampa, and against Comrade Ford in Durham and Toledo, mob action was resorted to, this did not rouse

the country against us, as the reactionaries hoped, but we turned the attacks into the most effective boomerang whereby we rallied even large sections of the capitalist press to speak in our defense, and won new sympathy from millions who were formerly indifferent to us. Here also is a great achievement.

Turning to the more technical aspects of the campaign, one can list among our achievements the effective use, for the first time, of the radio. We reached millions with our message nationally, and in many districts also on a local scale. This must by all means be followed up and made a permanent part of our technique.

Our campaign literature was upon a higher political level, more effective and was distributed in far greater quantities than ever before in the history of our Party. While much more could have been done with this task and literature distribution was seriously neglected in many places, yet this still remains one of the strong points of the campaign.

The political rallies organized in the most important cities on a national plan were taken up most seriously by the district organizers and as a rule were models of effective political and organizational work, in which thousands of people participated in a responsible way. Unfortunately these models were not energetically followed everywhere in handling the thousands of lesser meetings, which left much to be desired.

Contrast the growth of the influence of our Party with the catastrophic decline of the Socialist Party, its growing inner crisis and one will at once get the different results of two

different policies. The S. P. policy flowed from reformism, sectarianism, influenced by counter-revolutionary Trotskyism; our policy was built on Leninism correctly applied to the present situation.

Let us now turn attention to some of the most serious weaknesses and shortcomings of the campaign. First of all we must speak of the entirely unsatisfactory state of the recruitment of new members. Our membership grew but there was not an increase in tempo to keep pace with our heightened activity and broadened contacts. Our units, sections and districts were not able to keep this task in the center of their attention. It constantly slipped into the background and was forgotten in favor of the more exciting and spectacular sides of the campaign. Concentrated attention to important industries and localities was also too often forgotten and the Party slipped back too much into the old diffused general approach against which we have struggled for years.

This means that our lower units showed a tendency to drift and become the playthings of spontaneous development instead of taking charge of this development and directing it to a conscious goal. That such a thing could happen proves that the units and sections did not conduct planned work, that they were not the organizational center which directed the activities of the membership toward pre-determined goals. This is precisely the condition that we find upon direct examination of the work of the units and sections. Their work remained too much a matter of routine handed down from above. Their initiative was low, their inner life unattractive and uninteresting; as a result they did not become the centers of



radiating energy, the dynamos of the Party. The decisive centers of Party activity down below were too much divorced from the units and sections, and did not find in them their basis and support. In fact, they forgot the central task of making the units and sections concentration points and radiating media of all phases of the campaign.

Closely connected with this and flowing out of it is the unsatisfactory quality of much of the local and neighborhood campaigning. There was mechanical repetition of the speeches and formulations of the national spokesmen and national literature, without any effort at independent local application and tying up of national issues with concrete local problems. Further, when local concrete applications were attempted there was too often a lack of care and precision, a sloppiness and carelessness and sometimes even a vulgarization of our policies which was very harmful. Such things could pass uncorrected only because the units and sections were not alert, and were not checking up on the conduct of the campaign, not conducting it as a collective undertaking but as isolated individual efforts. The struggle for a higher quality in all our work from top to bottom is the only answer to these problems.

In facing and solving the complicated problems of intensive work among the masses, and simultaneously building and strengthening the Party organizations and their role, a clear understanding of the characteristic Bolshevik approach and conception of the Party is required. A large part of our membership is new and unschooled in these problems. It requires constant educational work to transform these

members into conscious Bolsheviks—a task still most seriously neglected. Another part of the membership, longer in the Party, has become fixed in old careless bad habits, which have not been weeded out. Some of the local organizations have become careless and loose in their approach to Party organization and its regular functioning on the false grounds that this was what we meant when we warned against overloading the members with work beyond their powers.

Out of a loose and careless approach to the organizational building of the Party, there arise all sorts of political weaknesses and even deviations. There arise again examples of the old discredited theories of “mass work first” at the expense of neglecting the Party, and then the opposite and equally wrong theories of “Party work first” at the expense of neglecting the mass work.

Lenin taught us that true revolutionists never for a moment allow such artificial separation of “Party” and “mass”. Mass work without the simultaneous growth and strengthening of the Party is in danger of opportunist liquidation, while Party work divorced from direct and immediate connection with the masses will tend in the direction of sectarian barrenness and degeneration. The constant connection and interrelation between Party and mass work must become the dominant feature of our Party life, in units, sections and districts, if our Party is to exert its maximum influence in directing the millions of American workers and their allies onto the road of the People’s Front and eventually to socialism.

That these problems still exist for us is proven by the weakness and shortcomings of the elec-

tion campaign. It will be necessary to pay critical attention to all these features of our Party life, making use of our election experiences to drive out all looseness and carelessness, and to replace these characteristics by those of responsibility and vigilance throughout the Party.

Summing up this examination of the Party's role in the election campaign, we can say that despite serious weaknesses and shortcomings which must receive sustained and detailed attention at this Central Committee meeting and after, the Party followed a correct and consistent line which improved its position in every respect. Our Party demonstrated a growing political maturity and emerged as an important force in national life. We gained the sympathetic attention of millions and influenced them, and our Party now stands in an excellent situation to face the next tasks, much greater tasks, toward which we must now direct our attention.



## FOUR

# The Tasks of the Party and the Mass Struggles Ahead

I DIVIDE this section into four groups of problems. First, I shall deal with the problems and tasks of the coming economic struggles of the working class and of building its organizations. That includes the persistent fight for the unity of the working class, for the unity of the trade union movement. Secondly, I shall deal with the next steps in building the People's Front. Thirdly, I shall deal with the tasks in the fight for peace, how to strengthen the existing peace movements, and how to organize the tremendous peace sentiments of the American people. Fourthly, I shall take up the problem of how better to connect ourselves with the economic and political activities of the people, and through a better quality of Communist work, facilitate the building and strengthening of our Party.

To begin with, I shall take up the great marine strike which occupies the center of the picture today. This should be some indication to us of what is going to come in many other districts of the country. If one compares this strike with the great strike in the same industry in 1934, one can see on what a higher plane it is this year—how much stronger are the forces of the marine workers, how much

more widespread is their influence spreading to the other sections of the labor movement and how they are gaining international support from the French and Mexican longshoremen. That is why Mr. Ryan was in a hurry to adopt a solidarity strike with the employers as a means of combatting the solidarity actions of the workers.

This great battle in marine should become the first point of concentration of all the energies of the Party. Successful results from this struggle seem quite possible, quite within the grasp of the workers today, especially if we rally all possible support to them. They will have an enormous influence in stimulating and hastening the growth of similar movements that are maturing in many other industries all over the country.

We must not expect the developing strike movement just to come in one great sweep in the next few weeks and spread out all over the country. It will have its periods, its ups and downs, but we can expect some real results in the near future, especially if the reactionary employers carry through their present intention of halting the forward move of labor by open repression. The climax of the present development looks as though it will come about the time when the miners' agreement expires and when the problems in steel will have come to a head.

Those of us whose memories about former struggles are still fresh can remember the lessons of the past strike struggles. Most of the things we wrote in the last four years still hold good, and we should study them carefully.

The steel drive lagged definitely during the

period of the election campaign. Since the elections, it is picking up and gathering headway again, but I think that even with the rising development of the steel campaign, it is necessary to warn against any relaxation of the vigilance and persistence of the workers in organizing a greater drive in steel.

It is necessary also to say that there are still some districts of our Party which have not yet taken up the steel campaign with sufficient seriousness, even though there are important sections of the industry in their territory. We cannot really consider ourselves a serious revolutionary Party, the vanguard of the working class, if we are not the most energetic and constructive organizers in steel. In any place where the work of the Party among steel workers is being neglected, it shows that the Communists in these territories are keeping the Party on a low political level and preventing the Party from becoming the leading force among the decisive sections of the working class. These comrades are keeping the Party from performing its necessary duties for the working class. This warning holds true for the comrades who work in other basic industrial areas, in textiles, auto, rubber. Other basic industries will soon have, if they do not already have, the problem of an organization campaign.

In textile we see great struggles developing that promise much greater achievements than those of 1934. The situation today is such, what with the mood of the textile workers, that if all progressives work right and take the job seriously, the workers can make many gains. That is why it is essential for the Communists to work harder in textile, to give better guid-



ance and stand out as the most courageous workers.

In auto we see new struggles and what appears to be a new move of organization which is already talking in terms of new thousands of union members. More important, all of this organizing now begins to appear in the center of the automobile industry and not at its periphery. Due to the concentration of the auto industry in a few centers, with half a million workers, it is a special problem in a few districts and first of all for the Michigan district, which must persistently work among the auto workers and transmit the experiences of these struggles to the working class elsewhere in the country. But, just as marine, steel and textile are national questions for us, so is auto. By the very nature of the auto industry and the concentration of capital there, where the bosses represent the national money power of the country, it is necessary to have the national power of the workers mobilized around auto, too.

The next field that must be especially mentioned is agriculture. The activities there are tremendously encouraging, showing great possibilities. Unfortunately, there is a negative side to the picture, showing in many districts our neglect of this question. We can't afford anywhere to neglect the agricultural workers. We can't afford to have gaps in our line in this field. Where work has been done and progress made, it has already been sufficient to prove that it can be done everywhere where serious and intelligent attention is given to it.

The agricultural workers everywhere can play as big a role in building the labor move-

ment and in giving it a progressive tendency as they played in the A. F. of L. convention. They were one of the most significant groups of representatives present. The same role can be played in the whole labor movement and in every locality if it is given correct leadership and daily attention. We are going to demand it of every district. I believe that the Central Committee will agree with this emphasis.

Now about some details in the struggle for trade union unity and the relations between the C.I.O. and the Executive Council of the A. F. of L. We must emphasize what we said in the statement of the Central Committee, what we have repeated for the past nine months: It is necessary to fight to preserve unity below, in the city councils, in the state federations, to prevent the threat of a split from being carried through, to put up organized resistance to the plans of the splitters. Every progressive must emphasize that international unions must not be split by this division. We think that it would be harmful if any unions were divided, one section going to the C.I.O., the other to the A. F. of L. We believe that it is advisable for the existing unions to act as a body. We ourselves want to do everything we can to align them with the C.I.O. but under no conditions do we carry that fight on in such a way as to make a split in that union. Of course, we will do everything to prevent the reactionaries from splitting off any section of any union.

It is necessary to emphasize the need of keeping the C.I.O. forces together. We fight against any tendencies among the weak-kneed leaders of some of these unions to abandon the

fight and surrender to the reactionary policies of the Executive Council. We emphasize at every point that under no circumstances will we allow any weakening of the work of building the progressive movement inside the reactionary unions, those still dominated by the reactionaries. On the contrary, there must be more systematic work, especially in such organizations as the Carpenters' Union which in A. F. of L. conventions is voted from the vest pocket of Wm. Hutcheson, but which down below has numerous possibilities of progressive organization.

We will face and solve in practical work the special questions that will arise with the creation of new unions in unorganized sections of industry, as to where the workers shall be taken. For example, in the possible organization of some sections of heavy machinery, we will have the problem of determining whether these new unions go into the machinists' or into some of the other unions, whether it be the Amalgamated Association, or what.

Generally, we have been clear on this last question. We refused to use our forces to carry sections of newly organized workers away from the jurisdictional claims of the Machinists Union over into some of the industrial unions, where there was a fear that this would intensify rivalries and sharpen the split. We will have to keep that consideration carefully in mind in facing such problems under the new circumstances that are arising. We must understand that under all conditions we are driving towards creating the foundation, in the unions controlled by the reactionaries, for the struggle for unity with the industrial unions. If we are to organize strong progressive forces,



we have to give them a political basis on which they can fight inside the old unions. We must not allow the policy of head-on collision between unions to be developed in jurisdictional struggles where they can be avoided.

The conditions on which unity can be achieved are the withdrawal of the suspensions, the guarantee of the continuous carrying through of the organization of the mass production industries into industrial unions, the restoration of those democratic rights of unions further infringed upon by the Executive Council in Tampa, such as the actions taken against the federal unions, and rescinding the dictatorial powers of the Executive Council which came out of these last decisions.

Let us turn to the unemployed and W.P.A. workers and their organizations. The unemployed struggles are coming to the fore again as a key question in the whole political life of the country. The efforts now being made to squeeze down W.P.A. and relief expenditures from Washington, a typical and expected course of the middle-of-the-roaders of the Roosevelt administration, are tests to see how much starvation the workers will stand without fighting. We have seen in the last years in the relief policy directed from Washington a system whereby the administration regulates the flow of relief funds according to the scale of mass struggles that is put up in the various localities. They are constantly shifting their policies to test out how much resistance and struggle will be put up in any particular place. If they get by without any struggle, that proves to them they were correct in reducing expenditures. If they have a sharp fight, if there are collisions with the police and de-

monstrations and struggles around relief offices, that proves to them they were wrong, and they begin to raise expenditures up a little bit again. It is impossible to impress this sort of mentality with any kind of language except that of organization and struggle.

In the period before the elections there was created a little bit of the feeling of security among the unemployed because things were rather stable for a time; but the change after the elections was so sharp that even the most enthusiastic supporter of the Roosevelt administration, the *New York Post*, had to write a sharp editorial asking, "Who won the elections anyway?" They said that if a person had gone to sleep just before election day and then awakened in New York last week, he would have thought Landon won the elections, because of relief cuts that were being carried through. Of course, Landon didn't win, and as a result we have greater possibilities of changing the situation, greater possibilities if we organize and fight. The unemployed question for a time has been pushed into the background of our work in most places. The question of the unemployed must come forward because we are faced with a critical moment in the whole problem of relief and work for the unemployed. How we will work in directing the mobilization of the unemployed and bringing the solidarity of the progressive movement around their actions may be decisive in determining a lot of other questions not only of the unemployed. The whole course of the administration in Washington may hinge on how this first post-election issue goes, on whether the forces of progress or reaction have the last word to say.

The gains of unity in the Workers' Alliance

have been great, but we have not fully exploited these gains and the possibilities of gains. Now the situation calls for greater attention to unemployment issues and unemployed struggles and to the unemployed organizations, more help and more guidance. These will encourage the next steps in building the People's Front.

This brings us to a problem which will probably play a most important role in the next immediate months, namely, the development of a legislative program for the new Congress. Around this legislative program must be built up a progressive bloc in Congress. And around these progressive forces a mass movement of support must be built up in the country. This is the first step to the next stage in building the Farmer-Labor Party.

It is clear what the nature of such a program will be. There will be concrete bills, as far as possible worked out under our influence, making concrete proposals for carrying through necessary labor and social legislation. The closest working together with all possible progressive allies in the furtherance of such bills is an essential prerequisite for their success.

Where our point of view does not receive the broadest support of the progressive forces, we will have to make, in addition to putting forward bills of our formulation, such compromises as will be necessary to get a working relationship with the other progressives who have different ideas from us. While frankly declaring our differences with them, we sometimes will have to support unsatisfactory bills. In other cases, as in the question of social security, there will be the problem of how to fight most effect-



ively for the Workers' Bill and the same time be prepared to unite with these circles of progressives who will want to improve and amend the Social Security Bill. We will have to join in all movements to amend and improve the existing Social Security Act by increasing its coverage and requiring the employers to foot the entire cost. But we will not give up the fight for the Workers' Bill, because the Roosevelt security act is built upon such unsound principles that, even if amended, it can never be converted into an adequate social security system.

We should also raise the question of a national conference of social and labor legislation, to be held in Washington during the sessions of Congress. This should not be decided by us as something we are going out to carry through. Rather, there should be a general get-together of all progressive groupings in a national legislative conference, bringing mass pressure to bear upon Congress in the early months of its session.

We should raise with our progressive friends the discussion of possible measures to democratize election rights and practices in the United States, thereby advancing civil liberties generally. There should be federal regulation of all elections involving federal officials which is now entirely a state affair with resulting chaos. This is an obstacle to developing a national fight for civil rights.

Following the same approach, there should be work done on a state scale. We already have experiences, showing the tremendous value of state conferences on social and labor legislation. This must certainly be organized in every state where there are any forces that can be

*National  
civil and  
election*

called together on any serious scale. Progressive groups in all state legislatures should also be formed. All this, let me emphasize again, is laying the groundwork for the Farmer-Labor Party and the People's Front. Only on the basis of such work can organizational measures have any serious meaning at all.

We want to give special attention to consolidating and extending the existing local and state Farmer-Labor Parties. There should be a warning word that in most cases these still have too narrow a base to be sufficient for extensive mass and legislative work. There should be no pretense of Farmer-Labor Parties where a mass basis does not exist. It is much better not to discredit the name of the Farmer-Labor Party by calling sectarian groupings by this name.

There is a pressing need for permanent relations between the Farmer-Labor Parties that now exist and between them and progressive groups inside the old parties. We will have to take up the detailed problems of how these broad progressive movements can participate in the primaries of the old parties on a local and state scale, and organize the fight of the progressives against the reactionaries in the primaries.

A platform of social and labor legislation, nationally and in each state, furnishes the foundation, the absolutely essential foundation, for every such effort. Without a big mobilization of mass support for a platform of social and labor legislation, any move towards organizing participation in the primaries would have very bad results. Even when the foundation is laid for this mass movement, there will

have to be the greatest care to avoid the inevitable dangers of throwing the masses back into the old two-party rut, instead of taking them out of it to build the Farmer-Labor Party.

There is the question of keeping the face of the Communist Party in the public eye and the platform of the Communist Party forward in all of this work. At the same time we cannot shove the Communist Party into everybody's face in such a way as to make the Party offensive to people. Nor should we uncover all our forces in those cases where it is necessary to have people working without being known as Communists. The problem of how to develop open and official participation of the Communist Party in all of these growing movements towards the People's Front becomes more and more important. In this respect we have to give some points of guidance. First, there must be the utmost pressing forward of every measure to create conditions in which the Communist Party can be accepted without serious difficulty by every progressive group. Great care should be taken not to prematurely push this question to a decision when the relation of forces is against us, and we are certain to be rejected. The Socialist Party in New York, ten minutes after they had been denouncing the American Labor Party, rushed to make a formal application for admission. This move considerably increased the difficulties of solving the proper relation between Socialists and Communists on one side and the American Labor Party on the other.

Under all circumstances we must give systematic attention to improving the working relations between Communists and the best



progressive elements in the Farmer-Labor and progressive movement. In some places we have made considerable progress in this respect, but in many places this is still neglected, and great possibilities of work are simply left unexplored. In many places there is a sort of shyness and timidity. Some of us think a Communist should not walk into the office of another organization for fear he might not be welcome. And in many places they are looking for us, while we shy away from important contacts. There must be more attention paid to working out the friendliest relations with these progressive people, in making better contacts and in developing good working relations on all issues.

We must constantly agitate for the earliest possible national unification of the movement for a Farmer-Labor Party, without trying to press at this moment for specific organizational moves to that end, in the form of calling conferences of any kind. At this moment there is a strong hesitation, and not among the most backward circles of the Farmer-Labor Party movement, to calling a national conference. They fear that it will crystallize the issue too soon, before the broadest possible forces have been reached. We must take this hesitation into consideration and give some weight to it ourselves. We have to do everything we can to create a feeling of confidence that a Farmer-Labor Party can be successfully formed.

We have to give more systematic and constant attention to the very broad united front formations which do not enter directly into the Farmer-Labor Party movement. They furnish a very good base and support for the Farmer-Labor movement. I have in mind, especially,

the American Negro Congress, the youth movements, the peace movement, church groups, fraternal organizations and so on. Most of these broad mass movements cannot immediately be a part of the Farmer-Labor Party movement. But they are definitely movements which can be used to extend the basis of the Farmer-Labor Party. It is absolutely an essential feature of our whole conception of the People's Front that such movements should be an integral part of the fight against reaction and fascism. As we get more definitely organized in the political field, along the lines of the People's Front, we will certainly find ourselves coming more and more into the position of the French people. There all of these broadest mass organizations are already a part of the French People's Front in a formal pact with the political parties. Although this cannot be the aim of our work at this moment, we should have in mind that we are working in that direction.

In this respect, we should mention the problem of the International Labor Defense and its growing importance. The whole question of labor defense and the struggle for labor's prisoners, internationally and nationally, is becoming more and more important. As the masses get a keener understanding of the problem of the protection of democratic rights, they are taking up the problems of political prisoners with a keenness and on a wider scale than we have ever seen in this country. Enormous things can be accomplished in the field of labor defense nationally and internationally if we give a little more attention to it.

We should mention the International Fund

of our Party and the systematic financial help which our Party gives directly to other Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries, as well as the German Party. We must insist more than ever that this International Fund should be scrupulously maintained and used as effectively as possible. It is one of the best examples of our Party's work, of its political development, of its understanding of its role. Our International Fund is one of the finest features of our Party life. I must say that I am proud of it and I hope that we will, all of us, unite in the firm determination that it is going to be maintained at all costs, and extended.

Now let us take up the special problems of the Socialist Party. It is necessary now to give an answer to what our attitude is toward the problem of the united front as a result of the changes that have taken place recently within the Socialist Party. Does this bring about any change in our tactics and proposals? As before, we still believe that the united front is absolutely necessary, and even today we are confident that the majority of the Socialist rank and file want unity.

New difficulties have to be overcome to achieve the united front. We must place the struggle for the united front into the foreground as essential for the whole future existence of the Socialist Party as a whole. The Socialists must understand that nothing of a constructive nature can come out of the Socialist Party except on the basis of struggle against the counter-revolutionary Trotskyites. The ideas of the Socialist leaders have been corrupted by Trotskyite poison. The Socialist



Party must rid itself of its poisonous influence, if it is to play any positive role in the struggles that loom ahead.

At this time, when the working class faces the danger of war and fascism, at a time when the people of Spain are fighting for democracy and life, Norman Thomas can find nothing better to do than head a so-called Committee in Defense of Trotsky. He spends time defending an assassin plotting the murder of leaders of the Soviet working class. We regret that the counter-revolutionary character of Trotskyism has left such a mark on the Socialist Party.

The only way to rid the Socialist Party of Trotskyite influence is by concentrating the struggle for the expulsion of the Trotskyites against their most apparently harmful manifestations. The Socialist Party has called a special convention for next March, as you know. We must consult with the best elements in the Socialist Party about their problems in the most helpful way. We have to help these healthy Left elements overcome the feelings of pessimism and passivity that now grip the best sections of the Socialist Party. They can make some change in the life of their Party at the March convention. These honest Left-wingers must build a solid foundation so that there will be no longer the old policy of drift, of never coming to a decision on all vital issues. They must prepare for the March convention of the Socialist Party to get results, to win the Socialist Party for the united front and make a clean break with counter-revolutionary Trotskyites.

Next, we turn to the fight for peace, and this means, of course, the question of Spain, where our slogan is "everything to defend

Spanish democracy". Besides the broadest and most intense political campaign that is possible, we must now, more than ever, give attention to organizing practical material help for Spain. This is not only a matter of raising funds, but of encouraging those honest democratic people who are organizing themselves to go to Spain to participate in the armed struggle against the fascist barbarians who are trying to drown a whole people in a sea of blood, who are destroying cities and civilization, who are worse than any pestilence or scourge. This movement towards volunteering for the armed defense of Spanish democracy is affecting all strata of serious democrats in America, especially the workers, but also middle class, professional and liberal people. We can only welcome all such heroic volunteers and urge that more persons follow their example which is in the best tradition of American love of democracy and hatred of tyranny.

The whole question of using the great mass sentiments against fascism can most effectively be crystallized around the struggle for the Spanish people, around the struggle for the defense of these particular outstanding champions of democracy and progress.

Let us also not forget, as there is sometimes a tendency to, the rallying slogans against war and fascism that strike directly at the worst enemies of peace, the slogans for the freedom of Thaelmann, for the freedom of other prisoners of the Nazis, for the freedom of Prestes. This latter has especially great significance in relation to the Inter-American Peace Conference today. There are governments present there pressing directly on the path toward fascism in the Americas, who are

parading in Buenos Aires as defenders of democracy on an international scale.

We must never forget that 90 per cent of the American people are resolutely opposed to war. It is this mass sentiment that must be crystallized into an effective weapon for peace. Through effective agreements for limited aims, through avoiding rigid forms, we must weld that healthy sentiment into a form to which the people are accustomed, and through this really mobilize them against war. We must take more serious responsibilities in helping to build the American League Against War and Fascism and bring it into a much broader united peace movement. Without such methods we will not be able to meet the issue of the coming war with any degree of effectiveness. It is only through the broadest mass federations of the organized peace sentiment of the country that we can really have some influence in America on the question of war and peace. We know that a small Party, even like ours, can influence the national life. We have proved it in the elections. Now we must prove it after the elections on the decisive question of war.

We have the special problem of cultivating closer cooperation with our brother Parties in colonial and semi-colonial countries. This has become an organized part of our life; but we still have a tendency to allow it to fall back into too much of an organizational routine and to some small material help. We must try again to revive the old project of making groups or districts of our Party give special consideration to Latin American countries and our brother Parties there. In order to develop this closer, more intimate, contact with our



brother Parties, we must do more than rely on general and formal relations of cooperation.

A special task in this fight for peace is involved in the utilization of the present Inter-American Peace Conference in Buenos Aires. We can use the peace sentiments and tendencies that were expressed at this conference to create better conditions, a better atmosphere for our whole peace work. We must endeavor to exert a direct influence among these circles, especially those in Latin-America, which are only beginning to come into contact with the proletarian peace movement in the United States.

There are many positive features of the Inter-American Conference which can be effectively utilized. In spite of all its shortcomings, the Inter-American Peace Conference does constitute a move against the fascist aggression. By that alone, it becomes a positive feature in the world situation, which can be used in the fight for peace.

Now, more than ever, there is the necessity for the fullest possible understanding of the Soviet Union as the bulwark in the fight for peace, and in the fight for progress of the whole world. How can that be done better than by popularizing the new Soviet Constitution, and when we consider that Constitution, what greater instrument is there than the recent speech of Comrade Stalin in presenting this Constitution to the Congress of Soviets? Would it not be a good idea if we would take Stalin's speech and make that a concentration point of literature distribution? I think that the Central Committee should issue a million copies of this pamphlet at a very cheap price. I am sure that if we could distribute a million

copies of the speech on the Soviet Constitution, it would help make for a better understanding of the land of socialism as the bulwark of peace and progress for all humanity.

We can now turn to the tasks of building and strengthening our Party. It is an established fact that the spontaneous struggles of the workers for economic demands and democratic rights cannot give the understanding and strength necessary to win socialism. What is required is the leading role of the Communist Party which teaches and guides the workers, which increases the fighting fitness of the working class for all struggles. It is in this connection that I want to deal with some organizational problems of our Party in order to examine those elements of our work which do not strengthen the working class and which prevent our Party from growing as fast as the situation requires.

First, I want to point out how the problem of building the Party is the problem of achieving two characteristic features of Lenin's teaching: the highest degree of centralization of direction and authority, together with the utmost decentralization of personal responsibility for carrying out the work. Let us examine the teachings of Lenin on this question, who said:

"The Committee must endeavor to achieve the maximum division of labor, remembering that different branches of revolutionary work demand different abilities."

This is another way of expressing the old American saying: Find a square hole for a square peg and a round hole for a round peg. This involves the whole question of personal responsibility. It means that each committee must know the capabilities and interests of

each individual member. It means that they must know the kind of person each phase of work needs. Collectively, together with the individual comrade, they must shape the policies of the work, guide and help the individual, and thus enable him to grow to greater political maturity, to establish his authority to the highest degree among the workers associated around him. We must bear in mind that only in this way is there the possibility of developing capable leadership that can serve the working class and the Party to the best of their trained abilities. That will certainly avoid the unnecessary shifting of personnel that is one of our troubles, and will contribute to the stability of Party leadership among the working class.

Now that we have stressed the decisive question of personal responsibility and careful attention, the next link and the most important one is to lift our units, fractions in unions and mass organizations, section leaderships and districts to the level of the high political tasks that they are confronted with. This can be achieved only if the lower bodies of the Party are not just institutions for carrying out organization tasks outlined by the central leadership. They have to become in the near future the basis for shaping the policies of their organizations, of the workers with whom they come in contact. In that respect, on the question of how centralized leadership needs decentralization of tasks, Lenin gave us a permanently valid directive:

“We must centralize the leadership of the movement. We must also (and indeed for that purpose, for decentralization is impossible without information) effect the greatest possible *decentralization of responsibility*



*towards the Party* of every individual member, of every section of work and of every circle belonging or adhering to the Party. Such decentralization is an essential condition for, and an essential correction to, revolutionary centralism." \*

We must consider the problem of activating the units and sections, and emphasize the special role of factory units. We must again remind ourselves of our decisions to promote new cadres, fresh forces out of mass work, those who have shown the greatest capacity for rousing, leading and organizing the masses. We must cultivate these cadres, train them, and systematically develop them to higher levels of leadership.

We must build up the authority of our leading committees everywhere. It should be the task of a leading committee to establish respect among the people, with whom it works, the respect that comes from the expectation that here is the place where we will get the answers to our question, here is where we can go for help, here is where we can be told those things that we can't find anywhere else. We have got to create that same authority, especially in our district committees. And the whole labor movement in the region should be taught to look to the district committee of the Communist Party as the place where they can go for authoritative answers to their problems, for serious help in overcoming their difficulties.

The centralization of leadership and authority and the decentralization of tasks are not yet fully understood. That is why we have so many troubles with recruiting. On the question of

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\* V. I. Lenin, "A Letter to a Comrade on Our Organizational Tasks," *Collected Works*, Vol. V.

recruiting, we must again call attention to the problem of concentration. I don't have to repeat the principle involved in this. We must point out that we do have a tendency to forget it. In the building of the Party, education and training become more and more important, especially the education and the training of picked personnel. We have gained many experiences in the past year which could be used effectively. There is the question of books and pamphlets, where we have made many important advances, and the press, where our experiences were not so good. There is the question of our schools, the question of forums and the more systematic use of the principle of forum organization, the problems of the radio, the problems of taking advantage of the capitalist press, a technique which we have just begun to touch, but which in general we neglect absolutely, the question of the movies, the theatre and arts, and all of these special activities, which must have a very distinct place in our process of mass education.

Especially important in the question of mass education are the *Daily Worker* and *Sunday Worker*. There can be no building of the Party without the much more successful extension and systematic regular connection of the *Daily Worker* and *Sunday Worker* with the broad circle of workers around the Party. There is a close connection between weak recruiting in the Party and the weak development of the circulation of the *Daily Worker*. Let the entire Party membership become conscious of the need of making the *Daily Worker* and the *Sunday Worker* our main weapons in the systematic development of our connections, their education and their recruitment into the Party.

We must bring to the fore now the necessity of spreading the Party organization to new

territory, and especially to small towns. This was emphasized in my mind very much by the experiences in Illinois, where the comrades informed me that the terrible election law there had a very good result for our Party. It forced us to go to every county in the state to get signatures. And we found that in the majority of the counties that we had never touched before, we had friends, people who had been waiting for us for years, people who said: "Where have you Communists been all the time. We have been looking for you for years. and you are the first live Communist we ever saw."

We must make greater efforts to extend our work among the Negro people. This should be a special point of concentration in recruiting. The burden should not be placed on our Negro comrades, but must be one of the major tasks of the entire Party. Likewise we should extend much more aid to our young comrades. We must help them with their special problems, especially the big job of preparing for their eighth national convention in April.

Throughout this whole work of building the Party, we must pay special attention to a higher quality of work. Here I want to mention what a great role the slogan of better quality of work played in the building of socialism in the Soviet Union, in the mastering of the tasks of industrialization, in the execution of the Five-Year Plan in four years. You will remember Stalin's great speech on this question and how it was decisive in the whole construction of socialism. Let us apply a little bit of that to our much smaller problems of just building the first foundations of a mass Party.

Without this constant struggle for quality,



for ever higher quality in our work, we cannot move forward. The building of the Party is not merely adding greater volume of Communists, more numbers, concentrating on statistics. It is essentially and centrally the question of constantly improved quality, greater effectiveness in every phase of our work. That means the better inner organization of our work, better distribution of our tasks, personal responsibility, and the avoidance of what is always a danger especially for our Party, the danger of departmental fetishism and the impersonalization of work.

Here again we can make some very good application of the experiences in the building of socialism in the Soviet Union. In their struggle for quality, you will remember they came to the question of the necessity of personal responsibility and the abolition of all impersonal forms of the organization of work. You remember how they expressed this so classically in the railroad industry. There had been an old practice of constantly shifting an engineer from one engine to another which resulted in the destruction of an enormous amount of the power resources of engines and railroads. What a tremendous improvement they made when they adopted a policy of making one engineer responsible for one engine. They made him personally responsible for the engine and did not merely place responsibility upon the engineering department for all the engines. One person was responsible for one machine and no excuses were allowed if the machine was not in good order.

All of these things are merely the concrete phases of the whole problem of the Bolshevization of the Party. Bolshevization includes all the measures we have spoken of, on the basis of a mastery of the theory of Marxism-Leninism.

## The Relation of the People's Front to the Struggle for Socialism

**T**HERE are still some of our friends (perhaps even still a few Party members) who are worried about the possibility that the struggle for the People's Front and its demands (which are compatible with the continuance of capitalism) may lead us to neglect or forget about our final goal of socialism. Some months ago, for example, our friend Scott Nearing wrote me a letter in which he developed the theory that, while the People's Front was necessary, it could not be built by the same party which fights for socialism. There must be a division of labor, so to speak, between two parties of the working class, one of which should struggle for the People's Front and its demands and the other should struggle for socialism. He seemed to think that the Socialist Party formerly had the first role and the Communist Party the second, and that now the roles are being reversed, with the C. P. taking the "reformist" road of the People's Front and the S. P. becoming the "revolutionary" party. Although Nearing is by no means a Trotskyist, it is clear that in this he was influenced by the Trotskyite tendency of thought, which has wrought such havoc

in Socialist ranks lately. Whether he would be of the same opinion now, after the campaign, is questionable; but still the problem requires continuous clarification for many people. This is our task, which we undertake without complaint. Every vital problem requires constant re-examination and re-statement, so also the problem of the relation of the People's Front to the struggle for socialism.

Our country, in common with the rest of the capitalist world, is threatened with reaction, fascism, and war. The reactionary forces are strong and menacing. On the other hand, those standing for socialism, which is the only final solution, are relatively weak—in the U.S.A., especially weak. Must we therefore become pessimists, and concede in advance that reaction and fascism must surely win, and that only through the bitter sufferings of fascism can the great majority be won to socialism? No, that would be absolutely wrong, it would be criminal, it would amount to a silent partnership with reaction. Although the great toiling majority of the population are not ready to struggle for socialism, they are ready to defend their democratic rights and living standards against the attacks of reaction and fascism, and they are more and more anxious to struggle for the maintenance of peace. Organized and roused to struggle, on a platform for which they are now prepared, they can and will prevent fascism from coming to power. We can organize and rouse them—provided we do not demand of them that they agree with our socialist program, but unite with them on the basis of their program which we make also our own.

They are not socialists yet for many reasons:



among these are that they have many prejudices and misconceptions about socialism and communism; that they think the problems can be worked out under a corrected and purified capitalism, and so forth. They believe that further experience will prove they are right. We disagree with them, we think that only socialism will finally solve our problems, and we believe that experience will prove that we are right.) In the meantime, both those who want socialism and the much larger number who do not can still agree on the necessity to defeat reaction, fascism, and war. Why not, then, unite all such people for their common purpose? That is the proposal of the People's Front.

The non-socialist progressives may ask, why should we unite with those who want socialism, and who say openly they think the People's Front will ultimately give way to socialism? Our answer is: we grant you non-socialists the right to believe that the ultimate outcome will not be socialism, but in the meantime only our unity and common front will prevent fascism from being the *immediate* outcome; therefore it is better if we continue our debate on this question behind the common line of defense we set up against fascism which would stop all our discussions. To our allies in the fight against fascism, we pledge the use of democratic methods as the sole means of resolving questions in dispute between us. Whichever of us is correct in the last instance, the interests of both will be served by unity and a common front.

To the advocate of socialism, who fears the People's Front as an obstacle to achieving the new socialist society, we say: Do you really think that socialism can come without the ac-

tive support of these great masses of toiling people who are not adherents of socialism yet? Of course you don't. Do you think you can win them over, if in face of the danger of reaction, fascism and war, you stand aside from them and refuse cooperation except upon the terms of their agreement to socialism? If you really think that, then you are poor socialists indeed, for you have failed to learn the elementary lessons of the great founders of modern socialism, Marx and Engels, and of their most worthy pupils who founded and built the first socialist society, Lenin and Stalin.

The problem for practical builders of socialism and fighters for socialism is everywhere and at all times to find the connecting link which ties up the life problems of the masses of the toiling people *at the present moment* with their largest historical interests that are represented in the future socialist society. They, the tens of millions who provide the moving force of history, must be convinced *upon the basis of their own experience in struggle* of the necessity and inevitability of each successive step of their movement toward socialism. The more they are organized and roused in struggle against the evils of capitalism the quicker they can understand and assimilate the teachings of socialism, and consciously take the path to the new society.

Now, when capitalism in decay, capitalism rotting and collapsing, is turning more and more to fascism and war, blindly and brutally destroying everything good which had been created in the period of its upward development, it is possible and necessary for us to do everything to get *tens of millions* into organ-

ized struggle against these most reactionary manifestations of capitalism. That is the quickest and most direct road to socialism—if the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin are correct. For those, non-socialists, who do not accept these teachings, this argument has no validity; to them we say, therefore, if the argument is not valid, you should not be afraid of it. This is an argument for socialists, not for non-socialists.

Everything that organizes and activizes the working class and its allies is progress toward socialism; likewise, everything that weakens and discourages the forces of reaction goes in the same direction. This is the fundamental conception that underlies the revolutionists' understanding of the fight for the People's Front.

What nonsense it is to think that socialism will come out of the work of an isolated sect to which socialism is a dogma and not a guide to action here and now in the daily struggle against capitalism's worst oppressions! That is a repetition of the sterile dogmatism of the Socialist-Labor Party, and will bring the same results. Only the party of the mass struggle for immediate issues today will become the party of actual socialist construction tomorrow.

What is true within our country, is true on the largest international stage. Today it is the Soviet Union, the land of socialism, the land where is realized the teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, which rallies all progressive and peace forces of the whole world in the struggle for democracy and peace—while at the same time it gives the most inspiring examples of the final victory of socialism, of its immeasurable superiority over capitalism, of



its fruition in a democracy beyond the dreams of bourgeois democrats.

~~The struggle for the People's Front, for democracy and peace, is at the same time the most effective struggle for socialism. Just because our Party has become the outstanding fighter for the all-inclusive unity of the progressive forces of America, with a non-socialist platform on which they can be united now, for that very reason we have a confidence that is unshakable that our Party, and no other, will lead the toiling masses of the United States to the realization of socialism.~~

# Who Are the Real Friends of Political Asylum?

*(Extracts from closing speech)*

**R**ECENTLY the Trotskyites, from their new vantage point inside the Socialist Party, launched another masked attack against the Soviet Union and against the revolutionary movement everywhere. This time they covered themselves with the names of various persons of more savory reputation than their own, persons who from political naivete or from considerations of factional advantage have lent their names to the Committee for the Defense of Trotsky.

This committee, setting itself the task of securing asylum for Trotsky, seems to think that it has placed the Communist Party in an embarrassing position when we oppose their demand for asylum. They charge that we have thereby become the enemies of the principle of political asylum.

Let these gentlemen know that we meet the issue that they have raised, squarely and without evasion. We declare that we stand unequivocally for the right of political asylum for those who suffer persecution at the hands of the enemies of democracy and progress, the reactionaries and fascists. At the same time we declare that we do not include in the conception of right of asylum, the right to use asylum to plot and conspire assassinations in

another country. When political refugees thus use the right of asylum, as was done, for example, by the assassins of Barthou and Alexander, they are discrediting the right of asylum and furnishing its enemies with the most powerful weapon for its abolition. The same is true of those who would defend others in such a use of the right of asylum.

We apply exactly the same principle to Trotsky and his accomplices in the murder of Kirov, and the plotted murder of a dozen other leaders of the Soviet Union. They have used, and continue to use, the right of asylum as the cover for their assassins' plots. Thereby they discredit the whole mass movement within the democratic countries which is demanding asylum for the hundreds of thousands of refugees from fascist terrorism. They turn the whole issue away from its true political significance, and try, so far as they are able, to establish that either there shall be no asylum at all, or it shall include protection for their assassination circles.

We speak out loud and clear on this question. We are against asylum anywhere in the world for those who make assassination their weapon of political struggle, no matter who they may be. We will support every sincere effort to outlaw assassination by international agreements. From the days of Marx and Engels, the Communist movement has always condemned assassination as a political weapon. We will still condemn it, we will not support it directly or indirectly, and when we fight for the right of asylum we specifically exclude from this right those who plot or execute assassinations.

We request that this issue be faced just as



squarely by the gentlemen who have lent their names to the defense of Trotsky. We ask Norman Thomas, in particular, and the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party, which authorized his speaking on behalf of Trotsky, just where they stand on this question. *Do you defend the right to use asylum to plot and execute assassinations?*

Please do not evade this question, gentlemen, by raising your extraordinary doubts about Trotsky's connection with the Kirov assassination. Sixteen of his collaborators confessed in open court, before the whole world; Trotsky accepted responsibility for them, after their conviction and execution by pledging to "avenge" them; and Trotsky has for several years openly written to prepare and condone assassinations in the Soviet Union.

Let me report some facts presented by Comrade Ercoli which will be of value to the entire working class in judging the activities of the Trotskyite counter-revolutionaries in all countries. He cited the case of a scoundrel, connected with both the police and the Trotskyist group in Paris, who attempted to kill Marcel Cachin and was prevented from doing so only by accident.

There was the provocateur linked with the Trotskyist groups who killed Comrade Camille Montanari, one of the best Italian revolutionaries. There was Maria Reese, expelled from the German Communist Party for upholding Trotsky's defeatist views on German fascism, who later became one of the leaders of the German Trotskyists, and during the Saar plebiscite made a Hitlerite speech over the radio with the approval of the German Trotskyist press.

There was Nils Hyg, one of the leaders of the Trotskyites in Sweden, who received money from the notorious Ivar Kreuger, whose specialty was financing fascist organizations.

In Budapest, a Trotskyist sheet appears legally, although Communist publications are prosecuted as high treason. A Hungarian Trotskyist (Weisshauss) in 1926 organized an attack on the life of Rakosi when the latter was working illegally in the country.

Ruth Fischer, liaison agent between Trotsky and the terrorist sent by him to the Soviet Union, is a close collaborator of Doriot, renegade and fascist leader. In Poland, the police publish Trotskyist pamphlets and try to circulate them among the workers.

In Italy, Trotsky's autobiography, which is a cesspool of slander against the Communist International, is recommended by the police for prison libraries.

In Spain and France the People's Front, which is the bulwark against fascism, is attacked by the remnants of the Trotskyite sect, who furnish agents-provocateurs in their attempt to disrupt the united front and the People's Front.

This list could be extended indefinitely. The connections between the police and the Trotskyites are an irrefutable fact. The French reactionary journalist, de Kerillis, has stated in *Echo de Paris*, that the French police possess proofs of the close ties between the activities of the Trotskyites and Hitler's murderous Gestapo. These facts are known to every one who wants to know the facts. The very least that must be demanded of those who would defend Trotsky and seek to win a new asylum for him is a clear and unequivocal answer to

this question. Evasion of this question will forever stamp the defenders of Trotsky as among those who opened the gates to the worst enemies of democracy and liberty, no matter how much they protest their innocence.

It is no accident that those who rush to put their names to the defense of Trotsky, and who speak on his behalf, have no such irresistible urge to have their names on committees for the defense of Spanish democracy, are not making speeches in that cause; they have formed no committees to secure asylum in America for the victims of Hitler and Mussolini. At a moment when hundreds of thousands of the heroic Spanish people are laying down their lives for the preservation of democratic rights, that is the moment chosen by these gentlemen to set up a committee to gain democratic rights, the right of asylum—but for Trotsky.

Class conscious workers, yes, even simple but serious democrats, will have no hesitation in deciding who are really the friends of political asylum, who are the friends of democracy. Those who rush to the defense of Trotsky are giving service to the worst enemies of democracy, to Hitler, with whose Gestapo Trotsky had secret dealings. Those who fight uncompromisingly against the political assassins, against Trotsky, and demand their outlawing, are the same people who unhesitatingly rush to the defense of the Spanish people, who organize material help, who are sending from their ranks personal help, who are standing in the forefront of the struggle for democracy and liberation in their own lands.

These are facts which show the sinister character of counter-revolutionary Trotskyism,



which show that it is nothing but an agent of fascism in the ranks of the working class. Five years ago, Comrade Stalin made a masterly analysis of the nature of Trotskyism in which he proved that it was nothing but the vanguard of world counter-revolution. Let me quote his profound words:

“. . . Trotskyism is the vanguard of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie, which is carrying on the struggle against Communism, against the Soviet government, against the building of socialism in the U.S.S.R.

“Who gave the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie its intellectual weapon against Bolshevism, in the form of the thesis of the impossibility of building socialism in our country, in the form of the thesis of the inevitability of the degeneration of the Bolsheviks, etc.? That weapon was given it by Trotskyism. It is not an accident that all anti-Soviet groupings in the U.S.S.R. in their attempts to give grounds for their argument of the inevitability of the struggle against the Soviet government referred to the well-known thesis of Trotskyism of the impossibility of building socialism in our country, of the inevitable degeneration of the Soviet government, of the probable return of capitalism.

“Who gave the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie in the U.S.S.R. its tactical weapon in the form of attempts at open attacks on the Soviet government? This weapon was given to it by the Trotskyists, who tried to organize anti-Soviet demonstrations in Moscow and Leningrad on November 7, 1927. It is a fact that the anti-Soviet actions of the Trotskyists raised the spirits of the bourgeoisie and

let loose the work of counter-revolutionary sabotage of the bourgeois specialists.

"Who gave the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie an organizational weapon in the form of attempts at organizing underground anti-Soviet organizations? This weapon was given to it by the Trotskyists who founded their own anti-Bolshevik illegal group. It is a fact that the underground anti-Soviet work of the Trotskyists facilitated the organized formation of the anti-Soviet groups within the U.S.S.R.

"Trotskyism is the vanguard of the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie.

"That is why liberalism towards Trotskyism, even when the latter is shattered and concealed, is stupidity bordering on crime, bordering on treason to the working class." (J. Stalin. *Leninism*, Vol. II, pp. 403-404.)

This warning of Comrade Stalin is of the utmost importance to the entire working class. It shows that mistaken tolerance, that ignorance of the counter-revolutionary nature of Trotskyism, are nothing short of a crime against the working class.

If the working class is to progress, if it is to build the People's Front against reaction and fascism, it must worm out these agents of the fascists who are trying to conceal their murderous activity by playing on the confusion of certain liberals. Norman Thomas and the other leaders of the Socialist Party, who are covering up Trotsky, are enabling these counter-revolutionaries to perpetrate betrayals of the best interests of the working class. We say:

No asylum and no tolerance for political assassins and assassinations!

Political asylum should be sought for the victims of political reaction and fascism which, trying to maintain a dying capitalism, is murdering and oppressing whole peoples.

We must and will win the working class to this stand!



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