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The 34th Anniversary of the Communist Party

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THE 34 YEARS since the Communist Party was founded, August 31—September 1, 1919, in Chicago, have been a time of many bitter and fundamental struggles. These were all basically related to the deepening general crisis of capitalism and the growth of world Socialism. The more important of these struggles were in connection with the two world wars, the rise of fascism, the greatest economic crisis, and the present-day "cold war." In all of these historic struggles the Communist Party, U.S.A., played an important, and in some cases, a decisive part.

Now there is looming up before our Party and the labor movement a new phase of struggle, which will be a continuation of the present "cold war" but under rapidly changing conditions. The most important element in the new situation confronting the world is that American imperialism, in its drive for world conquest through a great world war, has suffered a serious setback

through its enforced settlement of the Korean war. Wall Street reactionaries, through their Truman and Eisenhower governments, hoped to make of the war in Korea what Hitler and Mussolini made of the civil war in Spain, a starting point for a great world war. But overwhelming international mass pressure for peace, plus sturdy resistance of the North Korean and Chinese peoples, have shattered this plan and forced a settlement of the reactionary war.

This mass peace pressure developed in the train of the famous Soviet "peace offensive," the initiative for which was given by Stalin and Malenkov at the recent 19th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This "offensive" so aroused and encouraged the peace-loving masses of the world that their demand for a Korean settlement became irresistible. It reached the point where, in addition to the countries of Socialism and People's Democracy, not only India, Indonesia, the Mos-

lem bloc, and other countries in Asia and Africa insisted upon a war truce, but also Great Britain, France, Italy, Australia, Canada, etc. The anti-Soviet capitalist war alliance, which the United States had spent \$50 billions to build, threatened to go to pieces if the United States Government prolonged its cherished Korean war. So the war was ended, after a last-ditch American maneuver with the war criminal, Syngman Rhee, to keep it going.

The uneasy Korean settlement does not end the menace of a cold war, although it very materially lessens international tension. American imperialism will not give up easily its plan of world conquest through war. It is ready for any desperate venture to this end. It will spare no effort to re-create world tension and to rebuild its tottering world capitalist anti-Soviet war alliance. In this respect, one of the most dangerous policies the peace forces will have to be on guard against is the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of so-called "liberation." The "liberation" policy, which is an expansion of the Truman Doctrine under another name and more energetically pushed, calls for the instigation of civil wars in those Socialist and People's Democracy countries that refuse to put on the yoke of Wall Street. The great danger involved in this policy was dramatically illustrated by the recent riots in East Germany, which were nothing short of an attempt to foment a civil war throughout Ger-

many—a desperate adventure that might have led to a third world war.

The truce in Korea was a great victory for the peace forces of the world. It puts these forces in a far better position to fight the war danger in general. The people in the United States, who have repeatedly shown that they are opposed to war, are sharing this uplift in their resistance to war. Another great factor that will stimulate the American workers' struggles for peace, as well as their fight for other demands, is their alarm at the advent to power of the Eisenhower Administration. This event, as the National Committee's resolution points out in the July *Political Affairs*, has come as a great shock to the workers and has very much awakened in them the determination to fight. They realize that their worst enemies now have control of the government (Truman was also a tool of big monopoly and an enemy of the workers, although this was not so manifest), and, in self-defense, they want to fight. The period ahead, therefore, will be one of greatly sharpened class struggle in the United States, and at the heart of this will be the fight for world peace.

THE CRISIS OF AMERICAN LABOR LEADERSHIP

On this 34th anniversary of the birth of the Communist Party, the working class and the people of this country in general are facing a very

critical situation, so it is highly necessary to utilize the new fighting spirit developing among the masses in order to improve it. There is the continuing danger of a world war; there is a growing danger of fascism, dramatized by the growth of malignant McCarthyism; and there are increasing signs on the horizon of the approach of another great economic crisis. And the greatest menace in the situation is that the main leaders of organized labor—A. F. of L., C.I.O., Miners, and Railroad Brotherhoods—are following policies of “class collaboration” which entirely unfit them either to understand the grave problems now confronting the workers and the whole people or to take effective steps to solve them.

The especially corrupted and cynical top trade-union leaders, who are the characteristic American-type of Social Democrats, look first of all to the protection and fattening of their own rich sinecure positions. Traditionally, and secondarily, they have represented the interests of the skilled labor aristocracy at the expense of the broad masses of the working class. During the World War II and “cold war” boom, their base has been considerably extended by the corruption, ideologically and materially, of large sections of the lesser skilled elements by imperialism.

The term “class collaboration” is something of a misnomer in that it seems to imply a cooperation of the working class and the capitalist class.

Actually what happens under class collaboration, however, is that the labor leaders follow out what is fundamentally a capitalist political line and they enforce this upon the unions of the workers. That is, class collaboration means the subordination of the working class to the capitalist class. The world history of this treacherous policy bears out this analysis.

The class collaboration character of the policies of the present top leaders of organized labor is too obvious to need elaborate analysis here. Actually, they have an informal united front with Wall Street monopoly capital to support the essential features of its program of world conquest. They are labor imperialists and their main job in their class collaboration agreement with big capital is, by the use of imperialist slogans cunningly disguised with labor phases, to keep the masses of workers from making an effective fight against Wall Street's program. They are the little brothers of the big imperialists and they count on sharing, by political preferment and otherwise, the imperialist loot in prospect. These misleaders of labor bear a definite responsibility for the present critical situation in our country and internationally.

If there is now a war danger in the world, certainly the reactionary labor leaders have done their share to create it, with their support of all the monopolists' slogans and war plans—to the effect that there is a

Communist menace in the world which has to be fought and that a third world war is inevitable, their all-out support of the Marshall plan, Truman Doctrine, "liberation" policy, N.A.T.O., Korean war, monster war budgets, and what not. Characteristic of these labor imperialists, Walter Reuther, at the recent Stockholm meeting of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, went beyond even the most outspoken Wall Streeters by demanding that the counter-revolutionary forces in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc., be armed for civil war against their governments.

If there is a fascist danger in the United States, these bureaucratic labor leaders are also largely to blame. Being themselves inveterate Red-baiters, they have no impulse or disposition to fight against the loyalty pledges and thought-control measures that are now the beginnings of a fascist growth in the United States. They have made no fight worthy of the name against the outrageous Smith and McCarran laws, and the infamous McCarthy, Jenner and Velde purges have brought a minimum of objection from them. They have made little or no protest against the jailing of Communists under the Smith and other fascist laws, and they almost unanimously stood silent while the heroic Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were legally lynched.

If, too, there is the growing danger of a devastating economic crisis in this country, the top leaders of or-

ganized labor have done their part in bringing it about. They have refused, in a "boom" situation when the producers possessed enormous potential economic power, to fight militantly to keep up the real wages and purchasing power of the workers in the face of inflationary prices, swiftly rising taxes, and the workers' sharply increasing productive power in industry. Their general idea is that the workers must "bear their share" of the sacrifices needed to superarm the country. This accelerates the onset of an eventual economic crisis. The crisis trend is also greatly intensified by the labor leaders' reliance upon munitions-making to furnish employment; by their support of the Wall Street monopolists to cut off trade with the U.S.S.R., People's China, and the People's Democracies of Europe; and by other crisis-breeding policies.

SOME LESSONS FROM LABOR HISTORY

With their present reactionary policies, the top trade-union leaders are incapable of leading organized labor and the people safely out of the critical position in which they now find themselves. The labor movement suffers from a real crisis of leadership. This, of course, is nothing new for the American working class; for during the past half century, since the development of American imperialism, the trade-union movement in this country has been ex-

periencing a chronic leadership crisis in varying forms and degrees. The labor movement, in fact, cannot escape from such a crisis so long as its decisive leaders are supporters of the capitalist system and take their basic policies from the arsenal of the employers, as the top trade-union officialdom in this country have been doing since at least the turn of the century, and in some respects, even before that.

To list the employer-inspired or favored policies that have been inflicted upon organized labor by its capitalist-minded labor leaders, and which together constitute the chronic crisis of labor leadership, would run far beyond the scope of this article. A few of them are: the long-continued barring of the unskilled, Negroes, women, and youth from the trade unions; the constant disruption of labor's solidarity by the practice of craft autonomy; the decades-long fight against industrial unionism, against independent working-class political action, against the development of class consciousness, and against Socialism; the support of the imperialist World War I; the fanatical hostility to Soviet Russia; the speed-up, class collaboration, B. & O. plan policies of the boom period of the 1920's; the persistent fight against all forms of social insurance; and the support of the complex of reactionary imperialist policies during the past several years of "cold war."

The chronic crisis of labor leader-

ship, while always a drag on labor's progress, from time to time has become so acute as to almost threaten the life of the labor movement. A specific example of this was during the post World War I offensive of capitalist reaction against the trade unions, in which the panic-stricken labor officialdom ran for cover. Many unions were wiped out completely, and the labor movement as a whole suffered the worst defeat in its history. Another example was the political debacle of the top union leaders during the great economic crisis of 1929-33, when they helplessly followed the line of the Hoover government, hoping that, in fact, prosperity, as Hoover said, "was just around the corner."

The American labor movement has grown and progressed largely in spite of its ultra-highly paid official misleaders. The latter have chronically failed to carry out even the most elementary needs of the movement. The constructive work, historically, has in the main been done by the Left wing and by rank and filers generally. The only period when the top leadership has actually set out energetically to build the unions was during the middle and later 1930's, in the Roosevelt years. And then, only part of the labor leadership took a progressive course—the Lewis-Hillman group—while the rest—Green, Hutcheson, Woll, *et al.*—actually split the trade-union movement in a desperate effort to prevent the organization of the trustified indus-

tries. Significantly, the division in the trade-union bureaucracy at that time corresponded pretty much with the current split in the bourgeoisie—the Lewis-Hillman group especially going along with that group of capitalists who were willing to fight against fascism and aggressive German imperialism.

There was a sound political ground for organized labor, the Negro people, and other democratic strata, to cooperate with the Roosevelt government in the great struggle against Hitler fascism, and the Communist Party (despite the Browder opportunism) was correct in supporting such cooperation. But this cooperation should have been upon more of an independent basis. That is, organized labor should have developed its own political organization and set up a coalition relationship in the Roosevelt government, instead of, as was done, merely “supporting” that government. When Roosevelt died and the war ended, and when Truman began his anti-Soviet orientation and to develop the “cold war,” then organized labor should have broken with him and taken up a position of opposition, as was done by the Communist Party and the progressive unions. But, instead, the top leadership, true to its bourgeois character, developed a pro-war class collaboration with the Wall Street forces, with the present critical consequences to the working class and the American people.

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The Socialist Party (or more properly, its Left wing) in the first dozen years of that Party's life, its period of militancy, gave much of the leadership to the working class that the corrupt Gompers officialdom was altogether incapable of doing. But especially the Communist Party, ever since its foundation 34 years ago, has made major contributions in this general respect. Among the most outstanding examples of leadership given labor by our Party were: its rallying of the workers during the big employer-offensive of 1918-22, with its slogans of organize the unorganized, amalgamation of the craft unions, labor party, and recognition of Soviet Russia; its bitter struggle during the “boom” of the 1920's against the B. & O. plan, labor banking, “higher strategy of labor,” and the other paralyzing types of class collaboration; its militant leadership of the unemployed during the great economic crisis of 1929-33; its fight against fascism and to unionize the basic industries in 1933-39; the intense efforts to help win World War II; its brave fight against the Korean war and the other reactionary imperialist policies of the “cold war” period to date—1945-53; and, throughout the entire period, our Party's fight for the economic, political, and social rights of the Negro people. These many struggles

were not without important effect in substantially strengthening the general labor movement.

In the present period, with the elementary danger of war, fascism, and economic crisis confronting the workers, our Party is again called upon to exert the maximum of its constructive leadership—for the policies of the top official leaders of labor can only intensify the grave dangers now facing the working class and the people as a whole. It is precisely to prevent our Party from exercising this needful leadership that the Government is so ferociously persecuting its leaders and members under the Smith Act and other pro-fascist laws, without any regard for justice or democracy. The fight our Party has been making these past five years for a legal existence, and in general defense of the Bill of Rights, is one of the most heroic chapters in the whole history of the American labor movement.

In this period of sharp danger of war, fascism, and economic crisis, and also of a rising spirit of struggle in the working class and among the peace forces generally, the main objective to be achieved, so far as the labor movement is concerned, is to shift this movement's main policy away from an acceptance of Wall Street's line that a third world war directed against the U.S.S.R. is inevitable and necessary and to lead it to the adoption of the proletarian policy of the peaceful co-existence of the capitalist and Socialist worlds.

The progressive independent unions have a big role to play in this respect. The success of the whole fight against the dangers of fascism and economic crisis is inextricably bound up with the basic fight for peace. The National Committee's resolution in the July *Political Affairs* detailed the specific issues around which to develop this fight, so there is no point in repeating them here.

The basic policy necessary for this mass fight is essentially that of the united front from below. The great masses of the workers, plus considerable sections of the lower union officialdom, have a sharp fear of war, fascism, and economic crisis, and unlike their high-paid leaders, want to fight against them. It is these masses that we have to reach directly, and we should nurse no illusions that the corrupt top bureaucratic officialdom will develop progressive policies and struggles. The strongest point of the National Committee's resolution is precisely that it stresses the elementary need to unite these masses, especially in the conservative-led unions and other democratic organizations, with active coalition policies based on the urgent need of these masses. However, as developments of this nature take place it is to be expected that some members of the top officialdom will be forced to go along with them, or, at least, appear to be going along with them.

The Party's basic ideological task is to combat the widespread mass illusions associated with the general

bourgeois conception of "progressive capitalism." This concept is based upon Keynesism, and has as its practical expression the so-called "managed economy" of the Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower Administrations. Illusions about "progressive capitalism" which is the official policy of the great bulk of the labor movement, grow out of the ideological and material corruption of the skilled and sections of the semi-skilled workers by the imperialists—a corruption which in the working class of the United States has gone incomparably deeper and wider than in any other country.

Since the advent of this Keynesism, with the Roosevelt period, the propagation of Socialism in the unions has become virtually extinct, save on the part of occasional rank and file Communists. Even in the progressive independent unions there is practically no advocacy whatever of Socialism as the ultimate goal. The substance of Browder's revisionism was an attempt to commit the Communist Party to "progressive capitalism." A few years ago our Party, through a series of articles, began to fight the ideology of "progressive capitalism"; but this initial attack was not followed up. It is a great weakness of our Party that it has

for so long surrendered the trade-union field to the blatant advocates of this crass bourgeois reformism. It is high time, therefore, that the banner of Socialism again be unfurled far and wide in the labor movement and a relentless struggle be waged against the bourgeois conception of "progressive capitalism."

On this 34th birthday the Communist Party has both great opportunities and heavy responsibilities. Never have the masses needed its Marxist-Leninist leadership more acutely than now. The biggest internal obstacle the Party has to overcome in order to do its duty in the class struggle is sectarianism. There is a Right danger in the Party, of course, but the most predominant handicap is a Left-sectarianism which has grown as the Party, fighting against being destroyed or driven underground, has tended to shrink back upon itself and to neglect mass work on various fronts. Important developments may be looked for in the near future in the fight for the workers' living standards, in defense of the Bill of Rights, and in the building of a strong peace movement of organized labor, the Negro people and other strata. Our Party must gird itself to play its maximum part in this struggle.