

'I TAKE A FRESH LOOK' (II)

Communists and the Unions

By ALEXANDER BITTELMAN

THE KEY to a concrete determination of the vanguard role of our Party in the emerging period of peaceful coexistence is the development of correct relations between the Party and the trade union movement. In a general way, this has always been true—since the birth of our Party. But its truth assumes a different quality now because the American trade union movement has become in fact the leader of the working class.

This is something new and significant. Although this fact has been with us for some time, it is only lately that we began to sense its far-reaching importance.

The trade unions have always been the basic economic organizations of labor. But with the growth of their economic strength, with the widening and deepening of their economic and political activities, the trade unions were becoming something more than basic and elementary economic organizations. They were beginning to assume the role of working class leadership in many fields.

This developed from the immediate economic interests of the workers in particular, crafts, industries and unions—the traditional trade unionism of wages, hours and conditions of labor. But beginning with the Great Depression of the '30's and with the coming of the New Deal, the economic interests and activities of the trade unions have been gradually widening and deepening.

From the issues of wages and hours, the unions came to unemployment insurance and social security. Having entered this field (in which our Party played a historic pioneering role), they began to interest themselves in the economic life of the nation as a whole, setting up large scale, competent economic research and statistical departments. From there the trade unions took another stride forward: they began to develop programs against depressions and crisis which were touching intimately every major phase of the nation's economic and political life.

THE WELFARE TRENDS generated during the New Deal period found their main backing in the trade unions, though widely supported by farmers, the Negro people and sections of a small business. It was the trade union movement that has adopted in fact, though not formally, the idea of the Welfare State as the basic framework of its economic and political programs.

The result of all this is now before us. Political activities have become a major part of trade union life. Political cooperation and alliances between labor, farmers, Negro people and, to a degree, small business, in which the trade union movement displays initiative, have become an important aspect of American political life.

Hence we find that in the course of these years the trade union movement has grown to a position of actual leadership of the working class in the economic, political and, in part, ideological fields. It has become a major factor in the nation's economic, social and political life.

This is not the whole story. We must also consider the fact that many of the theoretical ideas underlying current practical trade union action are not working class ideas but petty bourgeois and bourgeois in their origin and class nature. The New Deal philosophy and economic theories, heavily tinged with petty bourgeois ideology, have much influence upon the thinking and theories of the

trade union movement. These are the negative aspects of the situation, obstacles to further growth of workingclass influence in the nation.

But this must not obscure the dominant positive aspects. The very illusion generated in the New Deal period that it is possible to do away with unemployment and economic insecurity without abolishing the capitalist system, has stimulated the trade union movement to deepen its economic and political programs and activities. This is a national peculiarity of American economic and political development which has much meaning for the course of social progress in the United States.

It is the widespread conviction, arising from the tremendous natural wealth and industrial and agricultural power of the country, that it is possible for every American to live a good and happy life without abolishing the capitalist system.

This is an illusion—but one of great dynamic possibilities for social progress and for the eventual socialist transformation of American society.

A NEGATIVE and dangerous aspect of the situation is the tacit acceptance, where it is not open endorsement, of the imperialist and war-mongering foreign policies of the monopolies carried out by the government. This is bad for the progress of labor and for the good of the nation; especially the persistent hostile and even war-mongering attitude of some influential trade union leaders to the socialist nations and unfriendly attitude to the new nations and underdeveloped countries.

These attitudes have been having a paralyzing effect upon the trade union movement. They have shown themselves to be a major obstacle to the further expansion of labor's strength and influence.

Most trade unions neither fight for nor support a policy of peaceful coexistence and competition, although the membership favors it and the American people as a whole want peace. The trade union movement still exerts little influence, if any, in the struggle to develop trade and cultural relations with the Soviet Union, China and the other socialist countries. Nor does the trade union movement carry on effective work for expanding normal trade relations with the new nations and underdeveloped countries, for extending long term aid for their industrialization on the basis of the non-imperialist and non-monopoly principles of Bandung.

These failures of the trade union movement can and will have serious unfavorable effects upon the course of the American economy, upon its capacity to find adequate markets for industry and agriculture. It is time to realize that by raising significantly the purchasing power of the masses of the American people and establishing large scale normal trade relations with all these nations, the American people will have no cause to fear bad economic consequences from giving up the annual expenditure of 40 to 50 billion dollars on armaments and war preparations. On the contrary, the economy will rest on a much sounder foundation, the dangers of wild inflation will be avoided, and—best of all—world peace will have a much greater chance of being successfully maintained.

The leading position of the trade unions in the life of the nation makes it possible for them to make a historic contribution to establishing and consolidating the period of peaceful coexistence and competition.

It is a fact that the monopo-

lies see in the trade union movement their chief potential and actual enemy even though the yet not fully conscious of this trade unions themselves are as fact. A new anti-union drive by the monopolies is now clearly in the making.

FROM THE FOREGOING, the conclusion is inescapable that correct relations between the Communist Party and the trade unions in the current historical period must rest upon the following basis: that the Party recognizes that the trade union movement has attained the position of leadership of the American working class; that this is a major and significant progressive development; that the Party will base its relationship with the trade union movement upon the recognition of and acceptance of these positive developments in the American labor movement.

This by no means signifies abdication of the vanguard role of the Communist Party as a party or of individual Communists as members of non-party progressive mass organizations.

In practice, the Party will seek to function "as the most advanced and resolute section" of the labor movement (Marx). It will support, advocate and fight for every progressive policy action of the trade union movement. It will frankly criticize shortcomings and will project programs and policies to advance the leading role of the trade unions and the influence of the working class in the affairs of the nation.

In this way, the Party will seek to function as that section of the working class "which pushes forward all others" (Marx). Individual Communists will naturally live and function in their non-party mass organizations in accord with the meaning and spirit of these vanguard principles.

This is not all, of course. In accord with its Marxist-Leninist theory and program, the Party will always and consistently keep open before the labor movement the historic perspectives of the class struggle, the next progressive steps in the course of its development, the ultimate Socialist aim and the American road toward it.

It is along these main lines that the Party will be able to discover the concrete forms and ways in which to realize its vanguard role in the new historical period. It is along these lines that the Party will be able to enter the next phase of its development—a phase which will mark a long step forward on the road to a leading mass party of Socialism, inspired and guided by the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

(Tomorrow—Toward a Leading Party of Socialism.)

Egypt Witchhunt

CAIRO, Oct. 12—A military court today granted a week postponement in the trial of 18 Egyptians accused of membership in the outlawed Communist Party.

Moscow Fights Flu

LONDON, Oct. 12—Moscow Radio reports the Soviet Union has marshalled all of its medical resources to battle a current epidemic of flu.

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