

THE COMMUNISTS CLEAR DECKS

By **THE EDITORS**

ONE of the most significant events on the American scene occurred last week when the Communist Political Association held its special convention in New York and unanimously decided to reconstitute the Communist Party. This bore implications of primary importance to the workingclass particularly, and to the nation generally. The press regarded it of first-rate significance judging from the extensive reports that appeared in New York newspapers. For the change from "Association" to "Party" had a third dimension that far exceeded the formal question of name; involved in that change was a multiplicity of factors that can, for reasons of space and deadline, only be indicated here. Subsequent articles will deal with these factors in detail.

Basic to the change was a reevaluation by American Communists of their world outlook. We have, in these pages, indicated some of the thinking that went into the reevaluation that had begun prior to San Francisco and which was substantially affected by the charges of a "notorious revision" of Marxism which the French Communists saw in the policy of their American brothers since the Teheran agreement. The ensuing discussion indicated that American Communists recognized their serious mistake in deducing from the historic Big Three concord at Teheran that a new era had begun and that class harmony would be the order of the day within states. Predicating their policy on this assumption led them to a number of practical mistakes. The draft resolution of the CPA's National Committee laid the basis for thoroughgoing, democratic discussion within the organization; the Marxist principle of self-criticism asserted itself in a manner unprecedented in the movement's history; and the convention's proceedings reflected the conclusions drawn from this discussion.

First, the draft resolution, with strengthening amendments, particularly on the role of monopoly capitalism, on the Truman administration, on the nature of the war against Japan, and on socialism, was unanimously adopted; second, the organization was changed from "Association" to "Party" and all that that connotes practically; third, a new leadership was elected, after painstaking scrutiny of the nominees, which

retained the most tried and experienced of the previous leaders, strengthened by a considerable number of trade unionists, shop workers and veterans. This was further evidenced in the composition of the national board of eleven members and a secretariat of four, headed by William Z. Foster, to direct the organization between meetings of the National Committee; fourth, the policies of Earl Browder, former leader, were rejected unanimously as a revision of Marxism and a negation of the independent role of the labor movement and the Communist Party.

FOR central to the whole discussion was the fact that the Communists had lost ground as the vanguard of the workingclass. Communists had always regarded their movement as standing in the forefront of the incessant struggle for progress; they had much, in their record, to warrant that assumption. As delegates indicated, the record showed their stellar role in the thirties when they led the nation in the stark struggle for unemployment insurance, their enlightening drive for industrial unionism, their outstanding role in the advancement of Negro rights; and furthermore, as the discussion showed, they had, despite their errors, made a mighty contribution in this war in their fight for maximum production, their stand on the "no strike" policy, their relentless opposition to the defeatists. Furthermore, there were many gold stars in the windows of Communist members—some



William Z. Foster

eleven thousand of whom had gone to the front lines and produced such national figures as Robert Thompson who won the Distinguished Service Cross.

Millions of Americans had come to regard them in that light. Men and women of all classes saw the Communists as selfless, hard-working champions of the people's good. As a matter of fact, this was highlighted at the convention by the stirring letter from Theodore Dreiser requesting membership in the organization; he wrote, in part, "I feel that the Communists have helped deepen our understanding of the heritage of American freedom as a guide to action in the present. During the years when fascism was preparing for its project of conquest of the world, American Communists fought to rally the American people against fascism. They saw the danger and they proposed the remedy. . . ." We believe Mr. Dreiser speaks as many thousands feel.

But Communists, uncompromising critics of their own work, felt that they had, despite achievements, fallen short of maximum contribution. The wrong theory and the enervating effects of dissolving the party were painfully clear. As delegate after delegate indicated by specific reference, they had lagged behind events; by failing to continue to regard the workingclass as the decisive class today, as yesterday, they had fallen short to a degree: they could have done, and could do, much more to contribute to solving the nations problems. The actual events of the past months proved to many, the delegates pointed out, the error in believing that the capitalists as a class would be guided by "intelligence"—Mr. Browder's contention; this assumption led the Communists to their train of mistakes, which, if uncorrected, would have ultimately caused the practical dissolution of their movement. This was dramatically highlighted in the discussion analyzing the disbanding of the organization in the southern states; the delegates evaluated that as the crassest example of the practical consequences of wrong policy. The same would have happened nationally had there been no correction. We do not have space at this time to indicate the sentiments of the Southern Communists—Negro and white—on this issue, but they focussed attention on this development and it became one of the

most impelling aspects of the discussion. And rightly so. For the southern experience served as an object lesson, one that the delegates, by their votes and their statements, indicated had been learned.

The reconstitution of the Party was based upon the pledge to continue the fight to crush fascism totally at home and abroad, to help build a durable peace, to make the agreements of Teheran reality through the creation of a powerful, militant, anti-fascist, democratic front at home and international unity, particularly between the Big Three, as the pillar of policy abroad. This demanded a genuine, well-knit, Communist Party based upon the principles of Marx and Lenin. The basis of the new constitution was emphasized by John Williamson, member of the secretariat, who said it sought to reflect "the specific and distinguishing character of our organization—namely, that it is the Marxist political party of the workingclass." The preamble to the constitution said this party "champions the immediate and fundamental interests of the workers, farmers and all who labor by hand and brain, against capitalist exploitation and oppression." As the program of action in the main resolution indicates, the immediate tasks are those of winning the war against Japan, a war which was characterized as a "just war of national liberation," an absolute prerequisite for peace and security in the Far East, and for the freedom of China and the colonial peoples of the Pacific. Integral to such victory in the war and for the good of the postwar, is the defense of the economic and democratic rights of the American people, especially its thirteen million Negroes. "The Communist Party," the preamble to the constitution declares, "upholds the achievements of American democracy and defends the United States Constitution and its Bill of Rights against its reactionary enemies who would destroy democracy and popular liberties."

In discussing their ultimate goal, the Communists recognized that "the final abolition of exploitation and oppression, of economic crises and unemployment, of reaction and war, will be achieved only by the socialist reorganization of society—by the common ownership and operation of the national economy under a government of the people led by the workingclass." The Communist Party, therefore, "educates the workingclass, in the course of its day-to-day struggles, for its historic mission, the establishment of socialism." The article of purposes describes the historic aim of the work-

ingclass to be "the introduction of socialism by free choice of the majority of the American people." Thus will the "achievements of labor, science and culture" be turned to the "use and enjoyment of all men and women."

THE whole gamut of national and workingclass problems was considered by the resolutions committee, which tackled the monumental task of sifting three thousand recommendations sent by the clubs and state conventions. These covered primarily the immediate questions of victory over Japan, an adequate reconversion program to meet the human needs of the country, the question of constructing a broad, anti-fascist, democratic front and its relations with the Truman administration, and the crucial question of Negro rights. We can, at this time, deal only briefly with several of these most central amendments.

In discussing the developments in the war against Japan—a "war of national liberation"—Eugene Dennis, member of the secretariat, was among many speakers who expressed disagreement with Earl Browder's statement at the convention that "official American policy, whatever temporary vacillations may appear, is pressing toward the unity and democratization of China." Mr. Dennis warned of the grave dangers of a compromise peace and that powerful capital-

ist circles will seek to stop short of total destruction of Japanese imperialism. He said this danger "will require the vigilance, the unity and the direct intervention of labor and the people, particularly from our own country. . . . We must help organize and set into motion the broadest labor-democratic coalition of all anti-imperialist forces, of all those desiring to bring Japan to defeat, a movement, a campaign to shake the country and stop the moves toward a compromise peace." Calling for the removal of Undersecretary of State Grew and his special assistant, Eugene Dooman, as proponents of a negotiated peace, Mr. Dennis posed the policy of unconditional surrender which makes unmistakably clear that that means "the complete destruction of the Japanese war potential and her monopolistic war industries, as well as the prosecution of all war criminals, including the emperor." He also urged a powerful campaign for an American policy toward China which would be based on the proposals and policy of the Yen-an government and urged American lend-lease aid to that government.

Another important task the resolutions committee tackled was the more precise characterization of the Truman administration. It was generally agreed that a too uncritical evaluation of the Roosevelt administration proved one of the principal reasons for accepting the wrong general line in the past eighteen months. The more precise analysis of the Truman administration included the idea that it, like the previous Roosevelt government, is "a democratic bourgeois government which continues to receive the support of the Roosevelt-labor-democratic coalition, and which responds to the various class pressures of the coalition." The amendment, however, noted that the present administration "tends in a direction away from the more democratic forces in the coalition and more towards its less democratic groups, trying also to conciliate even the reactionary enemies of this coalition." This, however, must be considered in light of the fact that the administration still seeks to keep contact with the democratic forces; hence, the resolution stresses the central importance of building the strength of labor and other democratic groups within the general coalition for the struggle against imperialist reaction.

Central in the fight for immediate demands was the question of reconversion, wages and jobs. Delegates in this panel urged support for the sixty-five cent minimum wage, the unemploy-



ment insurance bill for twenty-five dollars for twenty-six weeks, for the national equal pay bill introduced by Senators Pepper and Morse, the Wagner-Murray-Dingell social security bill and the Murray full employment bill. Because the delegates considered that unemployment is inevitable in privately operated plants, the struggle for sixty million jobs demands governmental works and projects. Involved also in this question and involved at its core is the question of Negro worker. The panel on reconversion said, in part, "While recognizing that seniority does not create jobs, and that jobs can only be won in a determined struggle of all the people, Negro and white, employed and unemployed, we do recognize that in this period of growing unemployment the problems of the Negro people require special attention." The acute problems of the Negro millions took a primary place in the convention, and we shall deal with them more adequately in our subsequent articles.

In brief, the convention was a landmark in the history of the Communist movement, and future historians will see it as a landmark for the nation generally. It was conducted in the freest democratic spirit, in which give-and-take discussions predominated. The healthy quality of self-criticism permeated the proceedings, a Marxist factor which the commercial press cannot begin to evaluate. We shall discuss later all the vital aspects of this convention; but suffice it to say now that it recorded a profound advance in the history of the Communist and Marxist movement in America; one that will be registered for the good of the workingclass and the people generally.

Trap for Labor

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its constitutional right to refuse to work on terms that are unacceptable to it. Injunctions, money damages and loss of union recognition are among the penalties which the bill provides for the exercise of this constitutional right.

That labor will leave no stone unturned to defeat this dangerous bill goes without saying. But the forces that are lined up in support of the measure are powerful. And it will require the united efforts of men and women from every walk of life to put an end to this menace to our liberties.

Mr. Sacher is attorney for the Transport Workers Union-CIO and other CIO and AFL unions.

NM August 7, 1945

The Undeclared

FOR MORRIS U. SCHAPPE

His voice is throttled now.
It breaks its strength against the stone,
shatters itself on the silences of the prison.
And the walls converge to violate the vow
this fighter made;
body and mind, by book and blow, I vow to serve the
people.

The film of memory unreels to a day
when the Great Hall hummed with students,
and the resonance of that voice is clear
on the sound track of the inner ear.
Warm with the sun of his conviction,
strong with the steel of certainty, it flayed
the cowardly heart, the deliberate renegade,
the calculating dereliction.

It was an instrument that played,
on the highest octaves of the spirit,
the rising music of a richer world
men struggle to inherit.
O look, it sang, at the soul of man—it is granite,
it is not the soul of a slave.
Man is a poet straining for a planet
Man is a scientist harnessing an atomic wave
Man is a soldier fighting for democracy.

Betrayed because he bridged belief and act,
that day he was the victor at the bar,
the accused against the impotent accusers
defeated by the towering fact
of his nobility:
they were the stunted, the pseudo-men, the losers.

Acclaim the scholar, the teacher, the fighter.
Honor the hard, resilient will,
the voice still vibrant through the stone,
the soul still steel.
Welcome him home with holiday exultation
Proclaim his precious liberty
after the bitter delay.

O hasten the day!
Shout out for him, set him free!

SEYMOUR GREGORY.

Mr. Gregory's poem won an honorable mention in the Art Young Memorial Award Poetry Contest the results of which were announced in our special cultural issue last week.