
THE DUBINSKY SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS

BY GILBERT GREEN

IN THE state of New York the struggle against the Dubinsky-*New Leader-Forward* wing of Social-Democracy is of utmost importance in the struggle to smash the anti-war conspiracy in the ranks of labor, to bring about labor unity and to win the state for Roosevelt in the 1944 elections.

The struggle against this disruptive wing of Social-Democracy has been on our agenda for some time. But today we can no longer tarry. We can no longer retreat from it. We must prepare to wage it to a finish.

In the state of New York American Social-Democracy finds its ideological and organizational center. From here its corroding ideology and influence spread through the fibre of the nation as a whole.

The Dubinsky-*Forward* clique occupies many strategic positions of leadership. First, it controls a number of unions, the most important of which is the I.L.G.W.U. Through these unions it exerts an influence on the trade union movement as a whole and in New York on such important industries as aircraft and shipbuilding.

Secondly, it controls the state leadership of the American Labor Party—the party that polled 400,000

votes in the last gubernatorial election and is the balance of power in the state. This party is today being used as a political football for the intrigues and double-dealings of David Dubinsky who, at the same time that he invites Henry Wallace to speak at an A.L.P. dinner, becomes the champion of John L. Lewis' fight against the Administration and continues to have back-door agreements with Tom Dewey and the reactionary Republicans in the state.

Thirdly, these Social-Democrats have strong positions among the Jewish people through their control of needle trades unions, the *Forward*, and such organizations as the Workmen's Circle.

Fourthly, this groups wields considerable influence upon all sorts of petty-bourgeois liberal circles—the *Nation* and *New Republic*, the Union for Democratic Action, the various refugee relief committees, such as the Kingdon Committee. Through these spheres it influences the thoughts and actions of the would-be intellectuals in our colleges and universities, not alone in New York State but in the nation as a whole.

Ideologically and politically, the Dubinsky-*New Leader* wing of So-

cial-Democracy is allied with the Trotskyites, Lovestoneites and Norman Thomasites. Even though there is a division of labor in this coterie insofar as their public position toward the war is concerned, in practice they see eye to eye on most questions and collaborate closely. This gang has also received numerous reinforcements through the recent arrival in this country of thousands of Social-Democratic emigrés from Europe. Most of these emigrés hope to turn the United States, and first of all New York City, into the new international center for their divisive activity, using sections of the American labor movement to finance their special anti-Soviet, anti-unity so-called underground movements in Europe.

* * *

What explains the renewed brazen activities of this clique? It would be a major error to believe that this arises from a feeling of greater strength on their part, or from favorable objective conditions. Of course, there are certain objective factors that do help them. But this is not true in the main. Much of what they are doing today arises from their conscious realization that the main forces of history are moving against them. In desperation they are trying to stop and reverse the wheels of history.

Before June 22, 1941, the *New Leader-Forward* gang supported the war. They did so in the firm belief that in time the war would become transformed into a holy crusade against the Soviet Union. For

a period of time after June 22 they were certain that the Soviet Union was going to be defeated and hoped and worked toward that end. When the Soviet Union, despite their wishful thinking, did not fall, they still clung to the hope that at the very worst the war would end with a great weakening of the Soviet State internally and as a world power.

It has since dawned upon these gentlemen that they badly miscalculated. Not only is the Soviet Union not going to be defeated, but it will emerge from the war as an even greater world power. This is the fear that haunts this gang every day. They are more frightened by this prospect than they have ever been by that of a Hitler victory, and it is this fear that unites them today with the defeatists and reactionary forces in the country. They see only one ray of hope left, the prolongation of the war, the development of war weariness among the masses, and the consummation of a "negotiated peace" with Hitler.

Nor are they oblivious to what is happening in occupied Europe. They know full well that in such countries as France, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, powerful national fronts are being forged. In these fronts the Communist and Social-Democratic workers are fighting shoulder to shoulder. The *New Leader* gang fully understands that the Social-Democratic leaders who are today participating in the school of the anti-Nazi struggle are learning quite different lessons from those taught by the so-called emigré leaders in the Rand School and in the

New School for Social Research. Most of these Social-Democratic emigrés are not only men without countries—they are leaders without followers. Their one hope for leadership in their homelands lies in the expectation that the Bullitts and Berles in our State Department will be in a position artificially to manufacture the governments of post-war Europe.

In this country, too, they note with dismay and alarm the sympathy, respect and admiration so widespread for the Soviet Union. That is why they are compelled to laud the Red Army and the Soviet people, while trying to make a distinction between these and the Soviet Government. How fearful they are of an enlightened public opinion can be seen by the vehemence with which they are attacking the film "Mission to Moscow." For, if the American workers learn the truth about the Soviet Union, where will poor little David Dubinsky be?

* * *

What, however, explains the ability of these people to attack our most important ally without being rebuked by the important win-the-war sections of public opinion and the labor movement? What explains some of their partial successes?

We must first note that they are receiving considerable encouragement and support, not only from the defeatist crowd, but also from reactionary circles in the win-the-war camp, who, too, fear the growing strength and influence of the Soviet Union. These reactionary circles

have ties even within the Administration itself, as represented by the Berles, the Bullitts and the Biddles.

It is no accident that the Social-Democrats hesitated for a while before organizing their Ehrlich-Alter meeting in New York. This hesitation ceased, however, after Dubinsky had taken a trip to Washington and found that he had support there and that those who would not support him would refrain from attacking him.

Moreover, Dubinsky was able to exercise his control of the A.L.P. state leadership as a political club over the heads of such win-the-war figures as Senator Mead and Mayor La Guardia, getting them to speak at this shameful anti-Soviet, and therefore anti-war, spectacle.

But the main reason for their temporary successes is to be explained by the weakness and hesitation of the conscious win-the-war forces, especially in the ranks of labor, who did not speak up promptly and vigorously enough, exposing this plot to break Allied unity. The Alter-Ehrlich case was viewed by these win-the-war forces as some isolated flare-up which would soon blow over, and not, as explained time and time again by Comrade Browder, as part of a whole pattern connected with the new stage in the war and representing Act I in a well-conceived conspiracy.

This weakness is also associated with the weaknesses of the progressive forces in a number of important industries. These forces are relatively weak in the I.L.G.W.U., the main base of the Social-Democrats in New York. The fight against

Dubinsky in his own union is second in importance to none, if the win-the-war forces are to isolate and defeat the Dubinsky wing of Social-Democracy. There are considerable win-the-war forces in this union, but there is not as yet any movement of serious proportions threatening Dubinsky's ruinous policies. While it is true that these forces stymied Dubinsky's efforts to get his own local unions to support his stand on Alter and Ehrlich, it is likewise true that the progressive forces have not been able to get a single union or shop in New York to adopt a resolution condemning his policies.

Furthermore, the work of the most advanced and consistent win-the-war forces is weak in the basic industries, especially in shipbuilding and aircraft. In the A. F. of L. the strength of the Left-progressive forces lies in only a few industries and is weak not only in the I.L.G.W.U., but is even lower in such decisive unions as the teamsters, the longshoremen and the I. A. of M.

These weaknesses have a two-fold effect. First, certain forces that desire to move in a consistently win-the-war direction hesitate and fear taking public issue with Dubinsky because they do not have confidence in the strength of their own position among the masses. This is especially true of the Hillman forces in this city. Hillman wants to fight Dubinsky, but he is afraid to join hands with the Left-progressive forces. Such leaders as John Green of the shipbuilders and Kerrigan of auto, too, would prefer doing the

right thing, but often vacillate in the direction of the Social-Democrats because it is from that side that the main pressure comes.

The second effect is that the most conscious and most consistent win-the-war forces in the New York labor movement often feel themselves isolated from the other sections of the labor movement and for that reason frequently hesitate to speak up promptly and vigorously, as was the case at the time of the Alter-Ehrlich incident. Yet, the ability of these forces to move the labor movement as a whole in the correct direction depends greatly on their taking the lead and thereby encouraging like actions on the part of other win-the-war forces. If Hillman finally did come out with a public denunciation of John L. Lewis, it is in no small part due to the lead that had been taken by the Communists, and by other progressive forces.

* * *

The problem of strengthening our positions in a number of key industries is not the simple problem of numerical growth, important as that is. Most important of all, it calls for the pursuit of such broad policies as will unite all honest anti-fascist and patriotic forces. It is oftentimes possible for the Dubinskys and Antoninis to get support from people who do not agree with them on their fundamental policies. This is so because many such people, even though they hate Dubinsky, feel, all too wrongly, that on one count he is correct, namely, that the Communists are to be feared.

It is true that even people who appreciate our role in the labor movement today, who know that this role is essential for the war effort, fear the possible consequences of our continued growth and influence. Hillman and the forces around him respect us, know the important role we are playing, yet fear us. Some of the Murray people react in the same way. We know that among some people there was a certain uneasiness at the success of our party recruiting drive. Hence, a mere quantitative increase in our strength is not enough. This by itself may even complicate some of our problems.

What is it that these people fear? They fear that we Communists are out to capture and control the labor movement. They believe that we tolerate them today only because we are not strong enough to be intolerant. They believe that the stronger we become, the more precarious will be their positions in the labor movement. It is upon this fear that the Social-Democrats thrive. They nurture and cultivate it.

What does this arise from? Certainly not out of the issues of the day. It represents the remnants and the carry-over of the issues and divisions of yesterday, especially the divisions between Right and Left. There is no basis for such a division in the labor movement today. There is only one division today and that is between the win-the-war and the lose-the-war camps.

Yet we must admit that the old approach of Left versus Right has not been completely eradicated

even in our own thinking and approach. We occupy strong positions in the labor movement in New York City. But it is true that the section of the labor movement that we influence is often separated by a Chinese wall from other progressive win-the-war unions and leaders. This is true of the C.I.O. Council itself. This is reflected in the failure of the most advanced trade union leaders to work closely with, and influence, the John Greens, the Kerrigans and others. And yet the more we influence and the closer are our ties with the Hillmans and the John Greens, the more possible will it be to influence the masses who are today following the leadership of the *Forward-Dubinsky* clique. This same dangerous separation exists, not only between unions, but often within unions as well.

The dissolution of the Communist International emphasizes the need for eradicating the remnants of old divisions and the lowering of all artificial barriers that continue to separate us from other decisive sections of the labor movement. To help accomplish this we must also remove all obsolete forms of party organization, which help to perpetuate the fear on the part of non-party masses of the aims and objectives of the party in the trade unions.

* * *

Another obstacle to our arriving at closer relationship with other forces is that we have not yet clearly enough spoken out on our per-

spectives for the post-war world. Labor leaders such as Hillman will continue to have reservations and doubts, as long as they fear that once the war is over the old divisions in the labor movement will reassert themselves and that there can be no perspective for long-time collaboration with the Communists.

One of the main reasons for the weaknesses of the advanced win-the-war forces in the I.L.G.W.U. is the waging of the fight along the old lines of Right versus Left. This is also a major obstacle to winning the fight in the American Labor Party against the policies of Dubinsky and Counts. The majority of the workers in the I.L.G.W.U. and the majority of the 200,000 enrolled voters in the American Labor Party are neither Right nor Left. They are simply progressive trade unionists who want to win the war. As long as the fight is conducted on issues and divisions that have become obsolete, the progressive forces will only play into the hands of the Dubinskys.

This must especially be borne in mind during the heat of the present A.L.P. primary fight. How does the Dubinsky clique hope to win a majority? It intends to do so by avoiding present-day issues and by reiterating the charge that the Communists are out to capture the party. This is attested to by their many letters and leaflets issued in the past weeks.

It must be said that on the part of some of the progressives there is a tendency to bite at this bait and to help Dubinsky make the issue that

of control instead of that of policies. In one piece of literature issued in the Bronx, the progressives appealed for support to drive the Dubinskys out of the A.L.P. Such an appeal has all the earmarks of a factional plea for power. The progressives do not want to drive anyone out. They want to unite the A.L.P., to win it for correct policies, to make its leadership and its ranks more representative of the labor movement in this state and therefore to build it into a more powerful and influential party than it now is.

Instead of fighting on the false issues placed by Dubinsky, the progressives must fight on the real issues of today. They must ask: Why is Dubinsky allied with John L. Lewis in the fight against the President? Why has that great union, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, been forced to withdraw from the A.L.P.? Why is the great C.I.O. movement of this city excluded from the A.L.P. and its leadership? Why did Dubinsky join hands with the reactionary anti-Semitic Polish government-in-exile against the Soviet Union? Why did Dubinsky try to block the campaign for the Marcantonio anti-poll tax bill? And these questions must be answered in such a way as to show the workers where Mr. Dubinsky really stands on the war and why he must be defeated. The fight must not degenerate into an unprincipled struggle for power.

Among the Jewish masses in the city the fight is also too great an extent still viewed as Left versus Right. Many new positive develop-

ments are taking place in the direction of Jewish unity which will help obliterate these old lines; but the fact that they still remain is a major source of difficulties.

* * *

Our recent renewed offensive against the Dubinskys has been interpreted by some of our old-timers as taking on where they left off some years back. Of course, there is a relationship between the theory and practice of Social-Democracy historically and its position and role today. *But everything today depends upon our ability to see the developing differences and contradictions, the fissures and divisions in the ranks of Social Democracy.* To view Social-Democracy as a unified, homogeneous mass is to fail to deepen the divisions in its ranks and in effect to unite the camp of Social-Democracy instead of breaking it up.

Precisely because we are conducting open warfare against the Dubinskys, we are in duty bound to be more careful than ever in pursuing a policy of differentiation, of separating the sheep from the goats. We must not resort to name-calling. We must always be sure of our facts. We must always concentrate our fire on the conscious leaders of this conspiracy, being ready to modify our attitude and extend a helping hand to those who are temporarily influenced by Dubinsky and Company, or who for one reason or another are ready to desert them.

In a mass union such as the I.L.G.W.U., a real movement con-

ducted on broad lines will shake up the leadership itself, create rifts in its ranks and bring many lower officials into the struggle against Dubinsky's policies.

We see this happening in District 9 of the painters. By correct policies, the forces around Louis Weinstock have helped break up the Social-Democratic opposition in the union to the extent that we can report today that despite the desires of the *Forward* clique, the Social-Democratic group will for the first time in the history of that union not put its own slate in the field. It is now possible in this union to wipe out the old divisions of Right and Left and to establish a united union and a united leadership.

Another example of the correctness of this approach can be seen among the Negro people. A year ago the Randolphs and the Crosswaiths held the initiative. Today the reverse is true in the city of New York. Many of those who followed Randolph a year ago and who spoke at his March-on-Washington meeting in Madison Square Garden are today fighters for win-the-war policies, collaborating with the Communists, and were among those who helped make the Negro Freedom Rally on June 7 the great memorable demonstration that it was. Here the win-the-war forces did not hesitate to take the initiative. But they also knew how to pursue the broadest kind of policy, one that brought the greatest unity.

* * *

A few words on the ideological struggle against the Dubinsky-New

Leader stripe of Social-Democracy.

To a certain extent the appeal of Dubinsky to the masses is even more dangerous than the Lewis appeal. Why? Because the Dubinsky-*New Leader-Forward* wing of Social-Democracy cloaks its appeal in win - the - war and anti-fascist phrases. This gang even indulges in a certain "Left" criticism of the President, of both his domestic and foreign policies.

It is this demagogic cloak that enables these people to mislead many honest anti-fascists, especially among the Jewish people. But this demagoguery can be transformed into a double-edged sword because it arises out of a fundamental contradiction in their position. This is expressed in the fact that while they are doing all in their power to obstruct the war effort, divide the United Nations and harm American-Soviet relations, they dare not come out in their true colors, because the masses that they lead are solidly behind the war.

It is this contradiction which is the Achilles' heel of the Dubinsky wing of Social-Democracy. If this contradiction is exposed, it can bring their complete isolation and defeat. Their effort is to make the issue that of Communism. We must not permit that to happen. We must make it impossible for them to influence people into thinking that their stand on Alter and Ehrlich was only an anti-Communist act instead of one to break the unity of the United Nations and to obstruct the entire war effort. That is why Comrade Browder's charges against Dubinsky and

Chanin were so effective and created such consternation in their ranks, because he tore their mask off, made the war the issue and exposed their real position toward the war.

The contradiction in their position is seen also in the way they treated the miners' strike and Lewis' effort to re-enter the A. F. of L. Antonini, in an article in *Justice*, did not dare support the strike as such, but without a word of criticism of the strike or of Lewis leveled his main attack against the Administration and the Communists, and then added: "We cannot say that the miners were wrong in fighting for their right to a decent living." Note the hypocrisy here. He gives support to the strike by beclouding the real issue of the strike and the war with the false one of the right to a decent living. Likewise, Dubinsky defended his efforts to bring Lewis into the A. F. of L. by glibly talking about this being a step toward greater labor unity, and denying that Lewis was an enemy of the war effort. To the extent that we can expose these moves as directed against labor unity and the war effort, to that extent can we win the masses in opposition to Dubinsky's policies.

* * *

In conclusion, let me warn that despite the most favorable objective conditions for the isolation and defeat of the Dubinsky-*New Leader-Forward* gang, everything depends upon our ability to wage a consistent and all-sided struggle against

it, one that will enlist the support of all progressive labor.

Unless this is done, there is grave danger that this group of Social-Democracy will be able to win a new lease on life; will penetrate and influence new sections of workers and will win new positions of power. The Social-Democrats are today the leading force in the so-called American Labor Congress on International Affairs—a committee that has as its real objective the defeat of every move toward genuine unity among the United Nations and international trade union unity. We must note that this committee has the cooperation of many

labor leaders who do not yet understand its real intent.

If the Dubinskys, the Wolls and the Hutchesons are successful in getting John L. Lewis readmitted into the A. F. of L., this combination will constitute a great obstacle to labor unity and the prosecution of the war, and may become the reactionary Republican spearhead to break labor from the President in the 1944 elections.

That is why the fight against the reactionary wings of Social-Democracy is not our concern alone; it is the fight of all the conscious win-the-war forces in the ranks of the labor movement.