

Opportunists, and Renegades Fall by the Wayside

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"Revolutionary movements involve swift and rapid change. He who today is followed, tomorrow may be without a following. He who today is loved tomorrow may be fought. The history of all revolutions is full of examples of rapid change, the failure of certain persons to keep pace with that change, and the rapidity and remorselessness with which history sweeps them aside."

These words written by none other than Bert Wolfe, when he was still in our Party and in the Comintern, in his pamphlet, "The Trotsky Opposition," are true today, as they were at the time the pamphlet was written and published.

History is full of such examples, and our Party is not an exception. During the ten years of its existence, our Party has gone through many changes, moving from social democracy to Bolshevism. Many of these changes, had to be made rapidly. Some persons, many of the leaders, some of whom have even served jail sentences for their activities in the movement, have failed to keep pace and were swept aside and are by this time completely forgotten. Some of these leaders are openly fighting the Party and the Comintern at the present time, in alliance with the bourgeoisie and its agents in the labor movement.

Each time a change took place, these opportunists, without exception, raised the cry of a "running sore" in the Comintern, of the degeneration of the Comintern and of our Party, claiming that the Comintern did not understand the American conditions and was running the movement here. These individuals find themselves outside the Party and the labor movement, while the Party and the Comintern continue to march forward as the leaders of the working class and are gaining more and more influence among the masses of the workers.

Take, for example, the question of the legal and illegal Party which

at one time was the center of a bitter controversy in our Party. After the infamous Palmer Red Raids in 1920, we were driven underground. Not having enough experience and not being strong enough at the time we failed to fight our way back into legal existence. We developed the idealogy that it was impossible to function legally. This idealogy continued despite the fact that the conditions have changed and that the legal existence of the Party was obviously possible. Some of the comrades, leaders of the Party at that time, like Lindgren, Ketterfeld and others, failed to understand the correctness of the Comintern decision on this question; they were unable to see the changed conditions. They raised the cry of the degeneration of the Comintern, predicted a short life and all sorts of calamities for our Party and clamored that we were turning back from Communism to social democracy. These comrades quit the Party and the labor movement. They fell by the wayside and are forgotten, while the Party has since traveled a long way on the road to Bolshevism.

The Labor Party was another big issue in our Party. In our campaign for the Labor Party we were rapidly moving to the right and proposed an alliance with the so-called Third Party movement—a broad united front ranging from the Communist Party to the "left wing of the republican party," led by LaFollette. Weak as we were, both organizationally and ideologically, we were moving along an extremely dangerous path. The Comintern stopped us in time. The Party made a rapid turn. It separated itself from this dangerous united front, nominated its own candidates and carried on a Communist campaign in the 1924 presidential elections. Some of the comrades, like Fred Merrick, District Organizer of the Pittsburgh District at the time, who at one time spent three years in jail for his strike activities, could not see the importance of the rapid change. He thought that the Party was going on the

rocks, that the Comintern did not understand the American situation and that it was ruining the Communist movement here. He quit the Party and the labor movement. He was swept aside. He was forgotten.

The reorganization of the Party on the shop nucleus basis and other important steps taken by the Comintern toward the bolshevisation of our Party could not be understood by the social democratic elements in the Party. Some elements, like Lore, Askeli and others could not keep pace with the changed conditions. They raised the cry of the degeneration of the Comintern and of our Party, of the ruin of the Communist movement, predicted all sorts of ruinous results for the Party. They soon found themselves outside and fighting the Party together with the rest of the social democrats and the bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. They were swept aside and forgotten.

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern marked a turn from the second to the third period. Jim Cannon, an unprincipled renegade for some time, could not go along. He turned backward toward Trotskyism at a time when the Trotsky issue was already liquidated in the other Parties, and, like all other renegades, raised the cry of a "running sore" and degeneration of the Comintern and of our Party. Cannon and his group of builders of the Party and champions of Leninism" such as Abern and Shachtman, are out of the Party and out of the labor movement. They are fighting the Communist movement together with Lore and the socialist "forward." They have been swept aside and are not a matter of colivion.

However, while the Party was quick in dealing with the Cannon renegades, we showed ourselves to be slow in grasping the real significance of the Sixth World Congress decisions. While defending the decisions of the Congress, we were guilty of the theory of exceptionalism. This explains the many contradictions in the various articles written by Lovestone since the Sixth Congress, in which he, on the

one hand, quoted the decisions of the Congress verbatim or in a changed form, and at the same time develops the theory of the "Victorian Era." Papper at some of the "group" meetings openly raised the question that we are bound to come into serious conflict with the C. I. because the decisions of the Sixth Congress are difficult to apply in the United States." It is true that he received little encouragement in the "group" and the question was never raised openly in the Party. The Comintern, however, was able to detect this theory and exposed it when it told the Sixth Convention of our Party that the "minority had avowed reservations while the majority had tacit reservations."

With the aid of the Comintern, the Party recognized its errors and preceded to correct it after the Address of the Comintern was made known. Some persons, however,—Lovestone, Gitlow, Wolfe himself and others—failed to keep pace and others—failed to see the changed conditions, failed to keep pace with that change. This time more and stronger leaders were involved, because the issues are much greater, deeper and broader; because this time it involves not a question of an error here and there, but a question of change of the entire line of the Party.

These former leaders of our Party, too, raise the cry of a "running sore" of the Comintern, of the ruin of our Party; they, too, predict all sorts of calamities for our Party.

These "saviours" of the decisions of the Sixth World Congress, like the Cannon "Leninists" are fighting the Comintern and its American Section together with the other enemies of the Communist movement. They are outside of our Party and of the Labor movement and will soon be forgotten while our Party, under the leadership of the Comintern, will continue to march forward, leading the American working class to a victorious proletarian revolution and to Communism.