

RESOLUTION ON THE AIMS, THE TASKS AND THE
STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY

(1940)

1. The party aims at the seizure of state power by the American workers as part of the international proletarian revolution and for the purpose of establishing a classless socialist society. It bases itself on the revolutionary traditions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, whose fundamental ideas are crystallized in the program of the Fourth International. The aim of overthrowing the mightiest imperialist power in the world and reorganizing society on socialist foundations determines the nature, the tasks and the activities of the party.

2. The party bases itself unequivocally on the principles of Marxism, that is, the theory and practice of the proletarian revolution. Marxism is not a finished and immutable dogma, but a guide to action of the militant working class. Marxism, far from having been "refuted" by modern social developments and conflicts has been confirmed by them - if it is understood as a means of interpreting and changing society - and remains the only means whereby these new developments and conflicts can be understood. Since Marxism is by its very nature a revolutionary, living theory, and not a set of stone tablets, it must be constantly enriched and modified, in the spirit in which it has been developed up to now by its greatest proponents, and in the light of new events and experiences. In this sense, the party considers itself an aggressive champion of Marxism, a defender of its principles from the attacks of all its enemies.

3. The party emphasizes that, as a party of the international revolution, its main task is the organization and leadership of the struggle for socialism in the United States. Pre-occupation with the position and problems of the labor movement in other countries has only too often meant ignoring the position and problems of the labor movement in this country, and has been the pretext for not analyzing and participating actively in the class struggle here. The party aims to break with this spirit of pseudo-internationalism. True internationalism means the application of the lessons learned from the world wide struggle against capitalism to the struggle against the main enemy of the working class at home as the best means of advancing the interests of the international revolution. The real test of the American revolutionist is not so much his opposition to British, French, or German capitalism, or even to Stalinism, but to the ruling class and its social system in the United States.

4. In the sense indicated above, the party does not hesitate to call itself an American party, the party of the American working class fighting for the revolution in the United States. This demands, however, that the party have or acquire a thorough knowledge of the economic and political situation in the country in order that it may be able effectively to center its main activities in the American class struggle. The movement in this country has all too often displayed a more intimate knowledge of the situation in the Soviet Union or China or France than of the United States. It is imperative to make a radical change in this respect. If the party is to gain the confidence and leadership of the American workers, it must root itself in the American scene. It must study and analyze the history and the economic position of American imperialism; it must study and analyze American politics not only in general, but in their concrete and daily development; it must study and analyze the American labor movement. These studies and analyses, however, are worth while from only one standpoint, namely that they will enable the party to take active intelligent and effective part in the class struggle in this country, to intervene promptly and directly in American politics, and not merely to write about them as literary observers. What is said about the problem on a national scale applies with equal force to the problem on a local scale. The party must train its membership that its knowledge of the situation "abroad" is surpassed by its knowledge of the labor movement and the political situation

locally, so that in each locality the Party is able to participate directly and in time in the local labor movement and in local politics. From the lowest unit

to the highest, the Party must learn to react with full energy to the needs and struggles of the American working class. The respect, confidence and support of the American masses can be won in no other way.

5. Participation in the class struggle as an effective force is possible for the Party only if it is imbued with a spirit of action and combat. The working masses will not come to the party if it confines itself to telling them what they ought to do. It must show by example, by its own militant activity in the midst of the workers and side by side with them, that its program and leadership are worthy of their support. There is no other way for a propagandist group to develop into a party of the masses. This dictates an overwhelming emphasis upon party activism, day in and day out, and not limited to rare and isolated spectacular occasions. This means a constant training of the new (and old) members to the conception that the party demands of each and every comrade a basic minimum of activity on party assignment. This means constant selection and advancement of the active party members and a sifting out of purely book members who retard the work of others. A party facing such enormous tasks as does ours, must place corresponding responsibilities before its membership from top to bottom. It must be the aim of every branch to assign each member a specific task each week, thus doing away with the paralyzing division between "doors" and "non-doors". It is not necessary to approach every comrade, especially the new recruit, with such an attitude as will result in alienating him from the party immediately. But the orientation of a party of action and of individual responsibility must be kept firmly in mind until it is thoroughly established that the party is a serious organization of combat and not a casual discussion club for passing visitors. Otherwise the Party will surely decline into a futile reformist sect.

6. The Party cannot grow out of its present stage of a propagandist group unless its ideas, its program, its slogans are adopted by wide sections of the working class. Our party is the party of the working class. The socialist revolution is the revolution of the working class. The party can exert no influence at all in the American class struggle unless it exerts an influence in the working class. Hence, its main efforts must be directed towards winning workers to its ranks, primarily from the trade union movement. The proletarianization of the party is not only one of the most important guarantees of its revolutionary integrity, but is indispensable to its development as a decisive political factor in the country. The problem of acquiring an overwhelming working class predominance in the party is not to be solved mechanically or by the mere repetition of the wish. It is in the first place a political problem. It is solved by the political activity of the party. If the activity of the party, its slogans and campaigns, correspond to the needs and interest of the workers, the workers will respond to the appeals of the party. But this activity, these slogans and campaigns must be directed consciously and deliberately to the workers - primarily to those organized in the mass organizations, although not to the exclusion of the unorganized. Systematic, planned efforts must be made in every locality for members to establish contacts with individual workers and groups of workers. Every party member must consciously direct his efforts towards becoming a propagandist and organizer of his fellow-workers in the shop and neighborhood. Every party unionist must understand that his duty in the union - best fulfilled by being the ablest, most active and most class-conscious union militant - is to advance the influence and forces of the party in his organization. The party as a whole must concentrate on helping each individual member solve the problem of winning to its ranks those workers with whom he has contact. Experience, especially of the Stalinist party, shows that the initial isolation of the party from the workers in a given locality can be overcome by the selection of concentration points - factories and unions in the locality - at which a determined and systematic campaign of agitation and propaganda is conducted. A serious party of action must establish a network of such concentration points throughout the country. Without it proletarianization remains an empty phrase.

7. A revolutionary party functioning in present-day United States must direct its attention for the whole next period to two of the most downtrodden and dispossessed sections of the American working class: the Negro masses and the "looked-out generation", the Youth, each of which occupies a special position in the country and must be treated as a special problem. The neglect of the Negro problem is the disgrace of the American revolutionary movement. The extremely modest efforts made up to now show what a vast reservoir of recruitment and revolutionary potentialities is represented by the Negro masses. A branch functioning in a city with a Negro population is not worthy of the name of a revolutionary organization unless it recruits Negro workers into its ranks. Special attention must be devoted to this problem by the press, literature, agitators and organizers of the party. Similarly with the Youth. The unrelieved crisis shows them that they have literally nothing to gain by maintaining capitalism and everything to gain by overturning it. A party branch which does not have a youth organization functioning side by side with it, is only half a branch. The youth, combining studios with activity in the class struggle, is the most important single reserve of the party and its indispensable auxiliary. The party must root out the rotten reformist attitude towards the youth expressed in a contemptuous superiority, in the attitude of seeking to confine the youth to doing the "dirty work" of the party and nothing more. At the same time, the party must help the youth organization overcome the tendency to decline into a sectarian "super-political" movement and aid it to become a broad mass movement of militant youth, a training ground for the party and the class struggle. The party must give special assistance to the youth in establishing contact with industrial workers and the mass labor organizations, where the talents and energies of the young militants best serve the movement. It is most significant that, except for the Stalinists, ours is the only organization that has a youth movement of any importance. This is a precious revolutionary acquisition which must be constantly expanded.

8. The tragic experiences of the international labor movement, and in the Soviet Union particularly, with the ravages of bureaucratism, have made all workers rightly concerned with the problem of workers' democracy. Bureaucratism is the product of the social influence, ideology and pressure of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement, undermining, corrupting and demoralizing it. As an unrelenting fighter against class-collaborationism, the Party must at the same time become the outstanding enemy of bureaucratism in the working class movement. Opposition to bourgeois democracy in no wise signifies opposition or indifference to workers' democracy; on the contrary, opposition to bourgeois democracy without counterposing workers' democracy is only grist to the mill of fascism. It must not allow the slightest taint of bureaucratism or tolerance towards bureaucratism staining and discredit its name. Above all, it must relentlessly combat the pestilence of Stalinism, which darkened the inspiring beacon light of the Russian Revolution and which has alienated millions of workers from the revolutionary movement and the cause of socialism. The socialist movement, socialism itself, cannot be built by bureaucrats or by bureaucratic methods, but only be destroyed by them. Socialism must be and can only be the achievement of the democratically-organized, class-conscious action of the working masses in power.

9. The party, therefore, is organized on the basis of democratic centralism. True party democracy is possible only on the basis of an active membership able to and capable of controlling its leadership, and a responsible elective leadership which justifies itself by the correct policies it pursues and the activities which it itself engages in. A party fighting the class war must be a centralized and disciplined organization, which demands unity in action on the basis of democratically determined policies. This concept must not, however, be debased into the bureaucratic dogma that since the party "is at war," a regime of military-barracks-discipline must prevail. The right of discussion and of free criticism of the party leadership and policy, is a membership right at all times, to be modified only by the strictly imposed requirements of party activity. Without a rich, free and

variegated internal life, party democracy (and, in the long run, the party itself) is made impossible. A leadership which is satisfied with obedience, regardless of how obtained, has already abandoned the most elementary conceptions of party democracy. A membership which gives such obedience simultaneously surrenders party democracy.

10. An ignorant and uninformed membership is the bureaucrat's paradise. The first pre-requisite of party democracy is an informed membership. An indispensable element of such information is a regular, all-year-round bulletin in which the party leadership gives a regular accounting of its stewardship, informs the membership of its important decisions and motivates them, informs the membership about important differences in the leadership or the ranks, and permits the free discussion of problems of party organization, activity and current policy. However, the discussion of important political questions is caricatured and rendered meaningless if it is carried on by an "educated caste" on the one side, and an uneducated membership on the other. The training of every party and youth member in the fundamental principles of Marxism, in the main elements of international and American politics, becomes, therefore, one of the best assurances for the preservation of meaningful party democracy. The training of the party membership with the theory of Marxism is meant not only to equip it for more effective participation in the class struggle, but also for more effective participation in the inner life of the party, in the development of its policies, in constantly improving the relationships between the leadership and the ranks. A party member indifferent to continually learning more about the fundamental theoretical principles of the movement, is a party member who will be tolerant towards bureaucratism, or rather, who will become an easy victim of a bureaucracy, not only in the labor movement as a whole, but specifically, in his own party.

11. From this follows the need of constant attention to the theoretical development of the party. Every new member of the party, and especially all of the youth, must pass through at least an elementary series of study groups. Every branch of the party must set aside regular periods for educational discussion, either on a theoretical question or a problem of current politics. The educational work of the party must be guided and centralized by a special national department. The regular publication, distribution and study of the party's theoretical organ must have the attention of the entire party and youth, and not merely of a select group of "specialists." This organ must be one of the strongest pillars of the party. It must treat the fundamental theoretical problems of the movement from the Marxian standpoint. It must deal mainly, however, with the problems and position of American capitalism and the American labor movement, and demonstrate that the new generation of Marxists in this country are not only capable of repeating what Marx and Lenin said but of conducting independent and much needed investigations and analyses of new problems, of new political and social phenomena. It must not fear the discussion of new or even old problems on the grounds of an "orthodoxy" which has more in common with divine revelation than with genuine living Marxism. It should rather seek to continue the really best traditions of the Marxist movement, and its theoretical discussions, of the pre-war days in Germany and Russia, which made possible the enrichment of the arsenal of Marxism by such thinkers as Mohring, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky.

12. Just as the theoretical organ of the party must devote itself mainly to propaganda, so the popular political press and literature of the party must devote themselves mainly to agitation, i.e., to concentration on the immediate political slogans and campaigns of the party. If these campaigns are to mean anything, however, it is necessary to make a sharp turn from the old, humdrum propaganda methods. The press must truly be a popular political press for the American worker. If it is to influence and to be read by the American worker, it must be written in a style and a language that will make our ideas accessible to him. That means, firstly, an end to the "professional jargon" of our movement which is unintelligible

ible to him. It means an end to long and unread articles and to heavy, obviously labored propoganda efforts. It means writing about questions which not only concern him but in which he is interested -- questions of American politics and the American labor movement, not to the exclusion of international questions, to be sure, but nevertheless with the main emphasis on what he sees about him and what he knows about. It means, also, a paper to which the workers and worker-readers contribute, the adoption and extension on a large scale of that "correspondence to the editor" which features all the popular bourgeois papers. It means the attempt to center and continue the agitation of the paper on a central campaign for a given period of time, as contrasted to desultory, fitful agitation from week to week. This applies even more strongly to pamphleteering. The bulk of the party's pamphlets must be extremely cheap in price, extremely popular in presentation, devoted always to a single question, in most cases a question that is topical and related to the American scene. The party can well afford to model itself, in this field, on the best examples of agitational work in the pre-war socialist and syndicalist movements in this country. The lecture tours of party speakers, which must be systematically conducted, should also be arranged in the same spirit. In all its agitational and organizing work, the party must emphasize to the American workers that it is not a movement concerned primarily with things and problems which they now feel to be alien or remote from them, but primarily with the things and problems he feels are most acutely his, that it considers it to be, in a word, its task as internationalists to lead in struggle for the revolution in America.