
The Communist Party and its Tasks

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The Communist International was founded in March 1919; the Communist Party of England was organized in August 1920; the Communist Party of Germany, in the sense that it came into existence after the split of the Independent Socialist Party, was organized in the early months of 1921; the Communist Party of France was born in January 1921; the two Communist parties of the United States came into existence in September 1919. These dates show that while the Communist parties in the major European countries came into existence from 15 months to two years after the First Congress of the Communist International, the Communist parties of the United States were organized within 6 months after that congress. Actually most of the organizations and members that participated in the organization of these parties were out of the Socialist Party in less than 3 months after the organization of the Communist International.

It is only necessary to thus state the facts to find at once the explanation of the nearly two years of bitter internal struggle which the Communist Party of this country went through before it became a unified organization. In all the major European countries and many of the smaller ones — in Czecho-Slovakia the Communist Party was organized last fall and in Spain a congress is just being held at which the split of the Socialist Party is expected to take place — there were many months of educational propaganda and discussion within the Socialist parties before the division took place which separated the Communists from the Yellow Socialists and the Centrists of the Two-and-a-Half International. When the split of the Socialist parties did come in these countries it was a clean break, based upon a division on the question of principles, principles which had been discussed for nearly two years, in some instances, before every party unit and debated by the opposing factions in national conventions.

In contrast to this the Communist movement developed in the United States in a hip-hip-hurrah fashion. This was partially the result of the drastic action of the Right Wing Socialist Party officialdom. At the first sign of revolt within the party this officialdom endeavored to destroy the Left Wing by wholesale expulsions from the party, thus precipitating the break within the party. Through this course of action it not only injured itself, but the coming Communist Party, for through its tactics of expulsion it aligned with the Left Wing thousands of members who did not belong there and who would have remained in the Socialist Party had the issues between the two factions been as clearly defined and definitely understood through a long intra-party discussion, such as have taken place in the European countries. The issues which were fought out in the Socialist parties of Europe were consequently fought out between the two Communist parties and within these parties after the break with the Socialist Party. The Communist parties gradually lost the non-Communist elements during the nearly two years gone by, as the membership was successively tested by brutal governmental oppression and the clarification of principles which took place at each new shift of the party situation. As a result, there were less than a thousand of the original ten or fifteen thousand members of the Communist Labor Party who came into the United Communist Party and of the forty or fifty thousand Communist Party members not more than ten or twelve thousand are reunited in our party formed at the last unity convention.

Factionalism of a different type, more personal in character, undoubtedly played its part in the divisions and re-divisions, but this factionalism would not have been able by itself to bring about these divisions. It found a fertile field in which to operate because of the various shades of opinions of the membership which split away from the Socialist Party.

The achievement of unity between the Communist Party and the United Communist Party, in the light of what appears above, marks not only the formal unity of two organizations, but the unity of a membership which through two years of acid tests has developed a clarity of principles and understanding of Communism which makes it fit to become the backbone of a powerful Communist movement in this country.

That the two years of struggle has left only those members who were clearest in their understanding of Communist principles and

tactics, or those who during the two years gained a clearer grasp of those tactics — and who among the party members has not? — is shown by the fact that the Central Executive Committee of the unified party is able to say, in its manifesto to the membership, “No compromise was needed on either side to reach agreement on principles. The discussion soon showed that on program there was practically unanimity of opinion...”

With such membership, now united in one party, a new era should begin for the Communist movement in this country, an era in which the bitterness and strife of factional struggle will give way to an era of constructive work in building a powerful party as heart and center of a great aggressive mass movement of the American workers against capitalism.

The organization form of the new party is, frankly, a compromise, such a compromise as was inevitable in the clash of two extremes as those respectively occupied by the UCP and the CP on the question of language federations. The compromise rids the part of what the UCP considered the most dangerous elements of the CP constitution, and at the same time makes provision for language agitation and propaganda in such form as to meet the criticism of the UCP organization form, that no effective organs to perform this work were provided in its constitution. In which direction the future shift will be made can be left to be determined by experience, which will very likely eliminate this question as one of great importance, or at least develop new alignments.

The Party's Tasks.

The first great task before the party concerns the party itself. A new spirit must be created within the organization. Not only must the two existing party organizations be welded together formally, but the membership must be welded together and a new party morale created. This holds good not only as between the former UCP and CP membership, but also between different groups which existed within the two parties.

Two years of factionalism has left its mark upon the membership. Factionalism between the two parties bred further factionalism within the parties, which was not always of a very high character. It became the custom for every little party group which didn't like every detail of the party policy or the party leadership to become a faction which

refused to work, or even sabotaged the party work, unless it could have its own way. With the unification of the Communist Party that must end. A new spirit of cooperation and loyalty to the party must be built up. The membership must not spend its time trying to find pinhead points of criticism, but in giving wholehearted support to the constructive work upon which all are agreed. Criticism of shortcoming there must be, whenever there are such as to deserve it, but not that criticism, with which the movement has been cursed, which is merely a desire to find fault with those who have assumed the burden of party leadership.

The members of the party must keep constantly in their minds the part that the Communist Party has to play in the emancipation of the working class, and give hearty and loyal support to the work of fitting it for that part, refusing to be distracted from that work by petty politics or to permit the party to become the football of those who would play such a game. there must be discipline and loyalty. the Communist Party is an outlaw organization in practically every capitalist country of importance. Everywhere there is persecution and oppression. Read the roster of the capitalist countries and in each communists are being sent to prison, in some cases by the score. No movement which cannot create an inner discipline and loyalty which unites it as the iron ingots are united in the sheet of armor plate can hope to exist, to say nothing of leading the working class to victory against the odds which the Communist Party has to face. Such a unity within the party is the first task of the party leadership cooperating with the party membership.

The Communist Party and the Communist Movement.

The Communist Party is not a mass movement. It must be made up of a tested, educated membership. Every Communist Party member should be fitted by the party to become a leader of the working class masses. While the party is not a mass movement, the party must be the center of and have control of a mass movement which it leads into action. The conception of the party must be that of steel rods in concrete construction, which unite and tie together the great mass of cement and stone. Thus the Communist Party must unite and bind together the working class masses.

The most woeful failure of the Communist parties of the United States has been that they have not been able to create a working class

movement under their leadership. In this work hardly a beginning has been made, and it is for this work that the Communist Party exists.

The unemployment situation will serve to illustrate the character of the work which is the fundamental task of the party. The unemployed are scattered through hundreds, perhaps thousands of cities and villages. These unemployed might on their own account begin agitation, but it would be a sporadic, scattered effort, without coherence or unity of program. It is just such a situation which the Communist Party exists to meet. It is its part to develop an unemployed program, to create unemployed committees, in which its members take the leadership, to unite the unemployed committees in various cities and develop united action by the unemployed. It runs like a steel rod among the millions of unemployed, uniting them upon a common program and for common action.

The Communist Party may hand out to the unemployed masses its program calling for the overthrow of the capitalist government of the United States and the establishment of the Soviet government from now until doomsday, if it is satisfied with such theoretical presentation of its program. The unemployed workers will read the program — and probably wonder what fool drew up such proposals. A few may understand and these few may become recruits for the Communist Party, but the government that is to be overthrown will go blithely along, not much concerned with the effort to overthrow it. But if the Communist Party fulfills its function of organizing the unemployed, creating an unemployment program that deals with realities, drawing the unemployed into mass meetings, mass demonstrations, in support of this program, *which brings them into conflict with the capitalist government*, and in the course of which they feel the mailed fist of the capitalist government, then it will lay the foundation for arraying these masses against the capitalist government, and, when the time is ripe, of throwing them into action against it.

It is not too late for the united party to make its first real application of Communist tactics in the United States in the unemployed situation. The reports indicate that in place of improvement, unemployment grows worse. Whatever savings the workers were able to make during the better times gone by, are or soon will be exhausted. The bitterness of the unemployed will grow. They are more ripe for action than in the early days of no work. Let the unified Communist Party show its caliber by its handling of the unemployed situation.

What has there been written in regard to unemployment illustrates the task of the Communist Party in other fields. In the struggle against the reactionary trade union leaders and to create more efficient forms of union organization, it must fulfill the same function that has been outline in relation to unemployment. The party tactics include the creation of Communist Party groups in the unions, in the shops, in every kind of organization. Through these groups the organizations in which they function must be used o widen the spread of Communist agitation and create a greater Communist movement. It must take up every question of moment that affects the life of the workers, as these questions develop in the life of the nation, formulating its policy and agitating for that policy. Unemployment, the open shop, strikes, freedom for political and industrial prisoners, the burden of militarism and navalism, these are issues for Communist agitation. Only by skillfully directing its agitation on such questions toward the goal of arraying the workers in opposition to the capitalist government can the movement be developed which will overthrow that government. The Bolshevik slogan of the November revolution was "Bread and Peace." The slogan which will inspire the movement of the workers of the United States which will overthrow the capitalist government here probably has not yet been coined, but it is certain will have the same relation to facts of the life of the workers that "Bread and Land" had to the life of the Russian workers in November 1917.

The end of factional struggle between the rival organizations and the formulation of a program which has the united support of all factions removes the obstacles which have been chiefly responsible for the sterile character of the work of the Communist parties in this country. The unified party must write upon the blank page of the record of the future which lies open before it a more glorious record than has been written thus far. It must prove its right to be the representative of the Communist International in the struggle against the most powerful capitalist state in the world. Its task is one which requires all the ability that can be mustered within its ranks and one that should inspire every member of the party with an earnest determination that with the new unity shall begin a new era of party service and party loyalty, which will send the party in quick progress along the road toward its goal, the establishment of the Soviet Government of the United States.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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