

Some Basic Questions Answered

by Ben Gitlow

(Concluded from last issue)

WHITHER NORMAN THOMAS

Question No. 2: "Why do you say that Norman Thomas is the extreme right wing? Just because he is a bourgeois but so was Marx and Lenin."

Norman Thomas is the extreme right wing in the S. P. not because he is a bourgeois but because he represents in the Socialist Party the sharpest break with everything a Socialist Party is supposed to stand for. Norman Thomas advocates the liquidation of the Socialist Party into a petty-bourgeois liberal third party. He retains his membership in the Dewey organization (as the League for Independent Political Action). Norman Thomas is for general appeal to the "people", for abandoning the class struggle appeal to the working class. Norman Thomas is for relegating the fight for Socialism to the background in favor of petty bourgeois reforms and campaigns for "clean" capitalist government. Norman Thomas is for American capitalist democracy as against working class rule. Norman Thomas believes in the possibility of the present imperialist U. S. government being an agency for peace. Norman Thomas is for the imperialist World Court and League of Nations.

If space permitted I could quote Norman Thomas himself to bear out each and every one of the above contentions. On the controversy in the S. P. Norman Thomas prefers to remain silent, except on one minor point so that he can continue his flirtation with the leftward movement. On the question of special trade union organizers as advocated by the "Militants", he is quick to assure the right wing bureaucrats of the S. P. that he accepts their trade union position. Norman Thomas represents in the S. P. ideologically those petty bourgeois left liberals who, with the watering down of the Socialist program, find an opportunity for their political philosophy and activity within the Socialist Party because it is impossible for them to find expression within the two-party system of American capitalism. However, the first launching of a petty bourgeois liberal third party will find Norman Thomas advocating the liquidation of the S. P. Failing in that he and his followers will align themselves with a liberal third party of capitalism. That is why we maintain Norman Thomas is the extreme right wing in the S. P.

LOGIC OF THE STRUGGLE

Question No. 4: You say that the "logical" road for us is to go to Communism. But how can you expect us to go in that way as the Daily Worker calls us fakers and worse things (see some articles by H. Ganes.) And if we go to the Communist Party won't we be thrown out again the next day because we don't agree with Stalin about something or other? Don't you think that this road is something of a blind alley?

Some phases of this question I have already answered. The writer of the letter wants to know how can they, the "Militants", be expected to go to Communism if the Daily Worker calls them "fakers." Calling one a faker does not make one a faker. . . Communism is not the property of the Daily Worker. Nor does the stupidity of the Daily Worker contribute to win adherents for Communism and the Communist Party. Its jesuitical air of being the holiest of the holy, of representing the only "kosher" brand of Communism in America and of considering all who do not bow in reverence to all its bombast and trashy empty phrase-mongering, as fakers is actually repelling many who are approaching the Communist movement. The letters of the "Militants" proves this.

But if you are travelling the road to Communism, if your convictions as a Socialist leads you to the camp of Communism, then you owe it to the working class to stick by your convictions and not to abandon them because a Communist paper (which should be intelligent and not stupid) persists in calling you names.

The question which the "Militants" as Socialists should face squarely is not what the Daily Worker says but what they themselves believe will bring about the liberation of the workers from capitalism. If the answer is Communism then it is the duty of the "Militants" to declare openly their beliefs, to champion them and to fight for them.

But, says the writer of the letter, if we go to the Communist Party, the next day we will be thrown out if we don't agree with Stalin on something. Granted that the Stalin regime dominating the Communist International is responsible for a regime in the Communist Parties which does not permit expression of disagreement with its line within the organization. Granted that those who have dared to disagree with what they considered wrong policies, strategy, tactics and methods have been expelled. Nevertheless, how can one take the position that this makes impossible a fight for principles. For the fight which the "Militants" are making in the Socialist Party it is not decisive whether Stalin leadership are angels or devils. It does not alter or determine the fight which the "Militants" are making for what they consider correct Socialist principles and policies. To take a position that it does, means really to go up a blind alley—because if the logic of the "Militants" fight, if it is a principled one, is leading them

to Communism and they come to the conclusion that it is impossible for them to go to Communism because the Stalin regime is obnoxious to them, then to abandon the course of their struggle is for them to travel a road which leads them into the very positions against which they are fighting today.

The course of the Stalin regime should in no way change convinced revolutionary Socialists or Communists in their fundamental conceptions of the road of the working class in capitalist society and of the need of a revolutionary working class party, a Communist Party.

The "Militants" have set themselves the goal of winning the Socialist Party for what they consider a program of revolutionary Socialism, and of converting the Socialist Party into a revolutionary Socialist Party based upon the class struggle. They cannot ignore the lessons which the revolutionary proletariat and the world Socialist movement gained from the Russian Revolution. They must therefore be prepared to follow courageously and determinedly the logic of the fight which they are waging.

The "Militants", I am sure, are not naive political babies who are satisfied with just sticking out their tongues at Papa Hillquit and Grandma Deval. If they are a little spanking will put them in their proper places. Surely they must be asking themselves where they are heading to. The letters of the "Militants" indicate they are vaguely beginning to realize that they are approaching the Communist movement. But they are in a dilemma. The Daily Worker calls them "fakers" and the Stalin regime wants only puppets and will not tolerate in the Communist Party fighters with convictions. This is the tragedy of the present crisis in the Communist International. The setting up of puppet leaderships is not the method of Communism. It is wrong Communist policy. Nor is the mechanical application of decisions and policies without variations and with utter disregard to the actual conditions of the various countries (which characterizes the practice of the Communist International today) Communist policy. Unless a Communist Party is rooted in the soil of the country in which it operates it cannot hope to be the leader of the revolution of the exploited and oppressed masses against its own capitalist class. This however does not imply a cutting of

the tie which binds Communist Parties to an international organization which unites the revolutionary forces of the world proletariat against world imperialism. The international character of the struggle against capitalism and the need for international action on the part of the exploited and the oppressed masses makes the organization of the Communist International imperative.

It is true the Stalin regime is expelling Communists who are insistent upon the strict adherence to the prerequisites for the building up of the Communist movement in the United States. These Communists want a party that is part of the American workers not built on empty phrases and bombast. They want a party rooted in the workers organizations with influence and prestige among the masses in America. They want a party that builds upon American conditions and needs.

How can we achieve this? By giving up the idea of a revolutionary working class party, a Communist party, because the Stalin regime is today following a wrong course? I am sure this is not the way.

The most urgent need today is for a united Communist movement. Only thru such a united movement pursuing Communist policies based upon the actual objective situation in the country can the masses be mobilized for decisive revolutionary battles against capitalism. If not for the course of the Stalin regime today there would be no hesitation and doubt on the part of many "Militants" to follow the logic of their present struggle in the Socialist Party. They would be very clear in perspective. They would find their way easily into the Communist movement.

The best guarantee for a united Communist movement is a large determined conscious force of Communist fighters who fight for their convictions in spite of the great odds and tremendous difficulties which confront them.

To the "Militants" I therefore say: "Carry on your fight as principled fighters, regardless of where it leads you to. Hold firm to your convictions—then your fight will be effective. Then I am sure you will find yourselves eventually in the ranks of the Communist movement fighting together with us for its unification and for building it up as a mighty force that will lead the workers in the United States against the citadels of American capitalism."

THE CRISIS IN THE GREEK PARTY

Rebellion Against the Ruinous Ultra-Left Course

The crisis in the Communist Party of Greece, which has been developing in a painful and distorted form, has now burst out into the open and the development is taking a new turn.

The leadership of the Greek Party since 1927 was in the hands of the Khaitas, Eutykhadi and Voreinosh group, the group that had led in the struggle against the liquidators as well as the Trotskyites. This leadership formally accepted all the decisions of the Comintern expressing the new ultra-left course but it was obvious that fundamentally they were in opposition to this course. In April 1930, took place a plenum of the Central Committee of the C. P. of Greece. At this plenum there was a representative of the ECCI who was commissioned to put thru the new course in Greece. The appropriate resolutions were "adopted" and the Khaitas group became a minority—condemned as a "right wing" bloc. The May Day actions of the C. P. of Greece were a complete debacle—the first fruits of the new course. At the same time the Comintern and the new Greek Party leadership insisted on initiating the policy of "mass general political strikes." The Red federation of labor (Unitary Confederation of Labor) suffered a series of losses and defeats and became reduced to a skeleton. Khaitas immediately raised his voice against such adventurist tactics. In connection with the tobacco workers strike Khaitas demanded that the united front tactics with the reformist unions be established. The differences of opinion reached such a pitch that Khaitas demanded the right to present his views in the press to the Party membership. Of course, the bureaucrats ruining the Greek Party refused. Thereupon, Khaitas, who had the support of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League of Greece, published his declaration in the YCL paper, *The Young Leninist*.

We do not have Khaitas' declaration available but from the polemic against him in the official Party press it appears that some of the main contentions are the following:

1. It is necessary to review and re-examine all the decisions of the III Plenum of the Communist Party of Greece (held April 1930).

2. The general tactical slogans of the Party and especially the slogan of "mass general political strikes" at the present time, must be scrapped.

3. The basic tactical line of the Party must be steered away from ultra-leftism. Otherwise ruin faces the Party.

4. The real danger to the Communist movement in Greece today comes from the ultra-left "radicalism", from "left" opportunism, from "left"

phrase-mongering.

5. The estimation of the economic and political situation as made by the III Plenum and by the ECCI representative at this plenum must be re-examined.

6. The recent decisions of the Comintern are absolutely unrealizable in Greece.

He branded the new course of the Party as *anarcho-syndicalist* and essentially ultra-left. This declaration became the occasion for an open outburst of inner-Party struggle. The Party paper, *Rizospastis*, devotes

The First I

The First International Conference of the Communist Opposition met at a decisive historical moment. For the world working class this moment can be characterized thru these main features: First, practically the entire capitalist world is floundering in the depths of a severe economic crisis. Secondly, the war danger has reached the acutest stage since the Armistice of 1918. Thirdly, the Communist International today finds itself paralyzed insofar as international working class leadership is concerned. It is in the light of these all-important events that the first world conference of the International Communist Opposition worked, planned, and arrived at its decisions and policies.

For three days (December 15, 16, 17) delegates representing the Communist Oppositions of Germany, France (Alsace-Lorraine), Sweden, United States, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, and Norway (fraternal) met in Berlin and thoroughly examined the international situation, the crisis in the world Communist movement and the problems and tasks of rebuilding and strengthening the Communist International. Written reports were submitted from Austria, Finland, Italy, and Canada whence, for legal and financial reasons, delegates were prevented from coming.

The significance of this conference cannot be overestimated. It marked a decisive point of development in the struggle for the reconstruction of the Communist International. It laid the basis for effective, active cooperation of the Communist forces in the various countries expelled for fighting against the Party wrecking ultra-left course. The spirit of the conference, the manner of discussion, the way in which decisions were arrived at, showed how healthy were the forces marshalled under our banner in the determined struggle to bring back the world Party of Communism to the line and policies of Lenin. Delegates spoke as they thought and understood. Delegates did not ape. Delegates did