

ONCE AGAIN WE SOUND THE ALARM!

By Jay Lovestone

IT IS with profound regret and studied patience that we have been observing the latest trend in Comintern strategy and tactics. We have in mind particularly developments in France and Czechoslovakia. Of course, we do not overlook the gyrations in policy recently manifested by the Communist Party of the United States.

To the superficial observer it might appear an inadvisable consumption of energy for us in the U. S. to concern ourselves so much with the problems and policies of the working classes and Communist parties on the other side of the water. However, in view of the fact that the principles of communism are international and that today the tactics of the Communist International are uniform, it should be clear to all that the questions now confronting our French and Czechoslovakian comrades are of vital concern to us. Likewise it should be obvious to our comrades in the European countries, to the labor movement over there, that what is done, what is not done, and what should or should not be done in the revolutionary and general labor movements in America are of basic importance to them.

Before examining some concrete manifestations of what, in our opinion, is a potential challenge to the very life of the world communist movement, it is necessary to clear the ground a bit. Principles are decisive. But a practical application of the principles of the world communist movement is what determines whether any life is to be imparted to the fundamentals of any fighting movement. It is in this sense that we emphasize and cannot emphasize too strongly that **the practical application of the principles of communism by the Comintern outside of the Soviet Union is today almost uniformly wrong.** Specifically, the gravest danger to communist essentials, to the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism, is to be found in the Comintern's new evaluations of bourgeois democracy, in the new attitude manifested towards the use of the capitalist "democratic" state as the instrument with which to defeat fascism. Furthermore, an equally grave danger to the principles of communism is to be found in the fact that the Communist parties in a number of countries are playing with strictly nationalist, practically social-chauvinist, ideas in the realm of national defense.

"CHANGED CONDITIONS"

To us, Marxist theory is not a dogma, but, as we have time and again affirmed and re-affirmed, a guide to action, a manual of revolutionary practice. There is developing in the ranks of the official Communist movement a sort of a shibboleth which covers everything. This substitute for analysis, this substitute for critical thinking, is the so-called theory of "changed conditions." On the basis that conditions are supposed to have changed, everything is justified. On this basis, violent contempt is being fostered for any analysis of conditions and problems of the past. All that one has to say today

in the official communist movement to justify throwing overboard the lessons of previous historic struggles, to excuse and "explain" away lessons learned from experiences of the past, is that **"conditions are different today."**

This attitude saps the vitality of a virile movement—and communism must be a virile movement if it will mean a thing to labor. This attitude not only takes root in but is further aggravated by the system of inner-Party life prevailing in every section of the Communist International separately and in the C.I. as a whole. It is only because of these factors that, with clock-like precision, in thorough-going mechanical fashion, the various sections of the Communist International could be swung over night from ultra-left to ultra-right. These violent swings in strategy and tactics, altogether too divorced from the objective conditions at hand, could occur and do occur only because of the thorough-going lack of party democracy, the total denial of democratic centralism, in the C.I. as a whole and in its sections everywhere. Revelation becomes, under these circumstances, a substitute for explanation. Orders buttressed by threats of expulsion and name-calling like **"renegade from communism"** become a convenient although suicidal substitute for critical examination and frank, objective analysis and discussion.

DEFENSE OF FATHERLAND

Let us examine the situation in Czechoslovakia. We will not at this point elaborate our objection to what has been going on in the Czechoslovakian Communist Party since the Seventh Congress. We will merely offer, by way of elucidation to confirm our indictment, the following report on Czechoslovakia which appeared in the *Rundschau*, Number 19, of April 23, 1936:

"The Communist deputy, Dolansky, declared that Gottwald himself was the author of the resolutions passed by the Party convention. These resolutions, which he read to a very attentive audience, contain the categorical position of the C.P. of Czechoslovakia on the question of the defense of the Czech republic at all cost against German, Polish and Hungarian fascism. The C.P.-Czech. is, however, opposed to the proposed bill in principle because it is quite inadequate for the defense of the republic against fascism; because its anti-working class and anti-people's character and the power vested in the reactionary bureaucracy make effective defense of the republic quite impossible. The Communists will therefore propose a fundamental change of the bill when its discussion comes up so as to make it acceptable to the workers.

"Sverma, another Communist deputy, emphasized the determination of the Communists to defend the republic against the Third Reich." (P. 777).

But some comrades might say, after all, Czechoslovakia is only a little country, and, therefore, tragic

as this error may be from point of view of basic communist strategy, as a challenge to the *raison d'être* of the world communist movement—because of the smallness of the country, not much alarm should be raised over this "little" mistake. With such a mechanical approach we, of course, will not associate ourselves.

"POUR L'ORDRE"

The character of the mistakes is not determined by the size of the country in which they are perpetrated. But in order to avoid the charge of petty factionalism, we will go over to so big, so decisive and pivotal a land in present day world politics as France. Who of us has forgotten Thiers, the butcher of the Commune? Who of us has forgotten that his battle cry in the slaughtering of the Communards was **"pour l'ordre"**? And who of us can deny that France today, in the day of Herriot, Daladier, Mandel, Flandin, Sarraut, Petain, is just as bourgeois and at least as imperialist as it was in the days of Versailles and Thiers?

Yet, assuming that our memories are somewhat green, how could any communist explain the seven column streamer across the front page of *Humanite* of April 24, 1936: **"Pour l'ordre, votez communiste."** Surely no one in his direst anxiety to catch votes for Communist members of the Chamber of Deputies would say that it is a Soviet and socialist order that *l'Humanite* is talking about. Certainly, not even in the craziest moments of the ultra-left period did any official communist say that France had already reached a socialist and Soviet stage. We have levelled countless criticisms against the nonsensical theory of the "third period," but never did we level this charge. Obviously, the **"pour l'ordre"** of *l'Humanite* of April 24, 1936 refers to order in French capitalism. Is that an appeal for communists? Could or should communists ever try to win converts to the theory and practice of proletarian dictatorship, of revolutionary socialism, to the ideas and ideals on which the Soviet Union is founded, to the principles for which the Russian workers and peasants fought, bled and died, with such appeals for law and order, for civil peace, against class war in capitalist society?

Elsewhere in this issue we quote at length Marcel Cachin's appeal for votes. The communist movement is a class movement; it is a proletarian movement. Communism does not recognize the unity of the nation as such—especially in a first class imperialist land. Where is the class approach on the part of Comrade Cachin? Where is there the slightest touch of proletarian class-consciousness or Marxist-Leninist conception, in Comrade Cachin's approach or attitude when he says: **"... our country is at the mercy of a surprise attack. To defend the country ... we call for the unity of the French nation. Only this unity can stop a catastrophic fall and make of our country which we love a country full of friendship for all peoples ... that is why we**

(Continued on Page 6)

Again We Sound the Alarm!

(Continued from Page 4)

appeal to all men, to all women, to all adolescents of good will, from wherever they may come . . ."

THE "GOOD" CAPITALISTS

Such tactics are foreign to everything which was taught us by Marx and Lenin. They fly in the face of all experiences of the struggles of the workers throughout the world. The French Communist Party is today heeding only the traditions of 1789 and 1848—the years of the birth of bourgeois democracy. But the Comintern and the French Communist Party forget that we are now in the midst of the decay of bourgeois democracy. Why are they forgetting the numerous struggles of the working class in France against French capitalist democracy. Surely these comrades know that "democracy" is a form of dictatorship of the whole capitalist class—as a class—and not of the good fellows or the not such-bad-fellows in the ranks of the bourgeoisie. Why do these comrades maintain that fascism is an instrument merely of a section of the capitalist class and not of the whole capitalist class, for the purpose of maintaining the bourgeois social and economic system. Why do these comrades maintain that Fascism means the dictatorship merely of only the worst capitalist and not also of the "good" capitalists? Do our very loyal comrades in the ranks of the official communist movement tell us that these "good" capitalists now deserve the support of labor against the worse and worst ones? We hope their answer is **no**.

However, we must stress that, regardless of how many times they will answer this question of ours by a no, their present People's Front strategy leads them to the inevitable conclusion that the danger of fascism can be definitely avoided in decaying capitalist society by the communists giving themselves over to the tasks of keeping alive the bourgeois democratic form of capitalist dictatorship. It is because of this false strategy and tactics that "**L'Oeuvre**," central organ of the Radical Socialist Party of Herriot and Daladier, could say on April 18th, in a front page editorial, in commenting on a radio speech of M. Thorez, the outstanding leader of the French C.P., the following: "**Since then, however, something has changed.**" (since the People's Front was established—J. L.) What a sigh of relief and welcome!

And a justified one!

OPPORTUNISM IN AMERICA

And in the U. S. we find a leaflet distributed by the American League Against War and Fascism, which is under Communist Party leadership, saying the following: "1776—George Washington fought for liberty and democracy. 1936—We must fight to preserve it." So nothing has happened since 1776! Worse than that. We find the Communist Party, 8th Assembly District, New York City, appealing "**to the people of the Eighth Assembly District**" to listen to General Secretary Comrade Browder speaking on the radio by thus emphasizing its appeal: "**Communism is Americanism.**" It is because of the People's Front strategy, the strategy of blurring class lines instead of sharpening them, hiding and softening class antagonisms instead of developing and utilizing them in the interests of the working class, that such tragic errors are possible.

For instance, take the question of the Labor Party. The Labor Party is the first historical progressive step in the part of American labor towards its separation politically from the bourgeoisie on a national mass, class basis. But today the Communist Party considers the Labor Party as synonymous with the People's Front. Instead of considering the Labor Party as a force for sharpening class alignments, for making class lines more clear, the Communist Party is approaching the Labor Party in such a way as to make it a means of confusing class relations and diffusing proletarian class-consciousness—to the point of total disappearance. This is crassly illustrated in the leaflet on the Labor Party question recently issued by the C.P. of Paterson. The leaflet, entitled "**On Guard**," says in part: "**Democratic Mayor Hirschliffe and Republican Board of Alderman and Free-holders must be made to help keep industry in town. But not by Labor Relations Board that put the burden on workers through wage cuts, increased speed-up and union-busting. The present administration must be forced to reduce water charges, power and light costs and abandon its favoritism in taxation. If sufficient pressure is brought to bear upon them, this can be done. BUT A STRONG LABOR PARTY CAN BE RELIED ON TO CARRY ON SUCH A PROGRAM AND PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS, BUSINESS MEN AND ENTIRE POPULATION.**"

Let no one think that this is a local, accidental slip. The *Daily Worker* of Washington's Birthday, February

22nd, 1936, announces to the world editorially, "**A Farmer Labor Party—of trade unions, MIDDLE CLASS and Negro people and ANTI-FASCISTS—is the correct way to carry out the real American traditions championed by Washington.**" Not everyone who is for capitalism is for Fascism. Not everyone who is against Fascism is against capitalism. There are plenty of good, bad and very bad capitalists who are against Fascism and perfectly satisfied with bourgeois democracy as the state form to be maintained, as the type of capitalist class dictatorship to prevail. What business have such forces inside a Labor Party which is to be a distinct proletarian class party?

And what sort of argument is it for Comrade Browder to make in the same issue of the *Daily Worker*, in behalf of a Labor Party, when he says: "**A Farmer Labor Party will weaken both capitalist parties, the Democratic as well as the Republican, but IT IS THE ONLY FACTOR THAT CAN SERIOUSLY WEAKEN THE REPUBLICANS.**" Mrs. Roosevelt will take much cheer from this. She is well-known as a "friend of labor."

We are not sounding false alarms. We are issuing sound and timely warnings. When we raise this cry, when we signalize this danger to the life of our movement, we do not do it in any faction spirit, but in the sense of true comradeship and deepest concern for the principles that bind communists together throughout the world, for the principles that have served as the basis of our separation from reformism. We are confident that, if the memberships of the various sections of the Communist International were given half a chance to examine freely and critically the present dangerous tactical course of the Comintern, then this reformist, ultra-right policy could not and would not be maintained.

That is why we have emphasized and will continue to emphasize the need for establishing genuine Party democracy, thorough-going democratic centralism, throughout the sections of the Communist International, for establishing a collective international leadership in the C.I. as the means with which not merely to unify the ranks of the world communist movement but as the most effective means for overcoming such grave errors and preventing the recurrence of such suicidal mistakes. It is such mistakes in strategy and tactics that are now threatening to undermine the very foundations of the international communist movement.