

Social Democracy and the Communists

(Adopted by the National Convention of the Communist Party)

SOCIAL Democracy continues to be a major influence in the labor and people's movement of almost all capitalist countries. It plays a significant role in a number of colonial and semi-colonial countries. In our country while the actual Social Democratic or-

ganizations and their influence are relatively small, reformism in its specific American form is the decisive influence in the labor and people's movement.

It is clear, therefore, that a correct attitude towards Social Democracy and other reformist organizations and movements is most essential to our Party. Without it, it is impossible to overcome our sectarianism, to break out of our isolation and to effectively advance the struggle either for our immediate objectives or our socialist aims. In the past we suffered both from a woeful underestimation of the role and influence of Social Democracy and other reformist trends as well as from a narrow sectarian policy towards them.

PAST APPROACH DISCUSSED

— The very terms Social Democrat and Social Democracy were used by us almost exclusively in a derogatory fashion. While we did take a very positive position towards reforms under capitalism, our use of the term reformist only in a derogatory manner sometimes tended to give an impression that we feared or opposed many reforms because they might strengthen capitalism. Quite often, by centering our main criticism against the Social Democratic and other reformist leaders of the labor, Negro and other people's organizations, we weakened the necessary unity against the common enemy.

By the thesis that it is essential to smash all Social Democratic organizations as a condition to win the masses to socialism, we weakened both the unity in the immediate struggle and the winning of the workers to the socialist goal. By adopting a policy of striving towards the liquidation rather than the cooperation of the Social Democratic organizations we undermined, rather than promoted the united front of the Communists and Socialists. Most of these errors were common to the world Communist movement and their harmful effect was most sharply expressed in the characterization of Social Democracy as social fascism at the very moment when fascism was menacing the entire working class and all its organizations and trends.

A specific error prevailing for many years in our Party was the theory of "skipping over the reformist stage," which grew out of

the fact that the Social Democratic organizations, as well as the trade unions, were relatively weak in our country. This led to the theory that the Communists would thus lead the workers in organizing trade unions, a labor party, etc., free of reformist leadership. This attitude was carried over in other fields of work, including the Negro liberation movement. Remnants of this theory are still prevalent. It is one of the specific manifestations of our sectarianism, and a complete break with this skipping over theory is essential for a successful struggle against it.

CURRENT SITUATION: While there is no mass Social Democratic Party in the USA, it would be a mistake to underestimate the influence of the existing Social Democratic groups, trends and organizations, whose influence is far greater than their mere number or current activities in their own name. The trade union movement, now grown to more than 16 million members, is led primarily by labor and social reformists whose policies determine the program of the trade union movement.

To a degree the cooperation of labor reformists (trade union leaders who stand for capitalism and with no socialist background or traditions), social reformists (those labor leaders like Dubinsky, Reuther, Randolph, etc., who have a socialist background) and bourgeois reformists (liberal wing of the Democratic Party) in such organizations as Americans for Democratic Action is, in the absence of a mass Social Democratic Party in the U. S., and under the conditions prevailing in our country, performing the function of Social Democracy.

We should not push this comparison too far. But it can emphasize for us the fact that we do have the influence of reformism in our country, even though it is not identical with that of most of the other capitalist countries. We also can see from this that correcting the previous error that we have no problem of Social Democracy or reformism in this country should not result in labeling every reformist a Social Democrat.

It is erroneous to think that the American workers and their allies will create an anti-monopoly coalition and establish an anti-monopoly

government without the trade unions and other reformist-led organizations being the very basis for such a movement. This does not mean that all reformist leaders will readily support such movement and objectives or that many of them will not offer strong resistance to it. It will be a steady struggle in which the masses will push forward because of necessity and the experience they will gain in the course of the developing struggles on immediate issues. It will be a struggle that will inevitably result in differentiation within the leadership of the trade unions and other mass organizations.

In this developing struggle for the anti-monopoly coalition the more advanced forces of the labor and people's movement can and should play a most important and essential role. This is why, among other reasons, there is need for strengthening our own Party. This is one of the tasks that can be performed by the cooperation of the Communists and other socialist-oriented forces in the labor and people's movement. Such cooperation, as well as united action in defense of peace, civil liberties, equal rights and economic security will no doubt facilitate clarification of ideological questions among many and promote the movement for a broader united Marxist Party in our country.

NEW APPROACH — We must be on guard against confusing the need for a labor-people's anti-monopoly coalition with the perspective for a broader united Marxist Party. In some Left circles outside our ranks, such confusion can already be noted. Lack of clarity on this question can lead to a narrow sectarian position towards the anti-monopoly coalition and an opportunist position on a united Marxist Party. It is clear that these movements will develop simultaneously. They will generally support each other, objectively. But they must be seen as distinct movements with distinct objectives. Obviously, all those favoring and striving for anti-monopoly goals to be achieved under capitalism can be won for the first. Only those favoring socialism can be won for the latter.

Our emphasis for a new approach to Social Democracy and reformism generally is not based upon and does not imply the dis-

appearance of all difference between the Communists and Social Democrats, between the Marxists and reformist trends in the world labor movement and here in the USA. The new approach is first a recognition of a new situation, new relations of forces, new tasks, first and foremost being that of preventing a third world war. It flows from the fact that in the present situation, the paramount issues confronting the labor movement are the defense of peace, national freedom and democracy.

Our new approach does recognize past errors as well as narrowing of differences. On a world scale the new theoretical proposition that wars are no longer inevit-

able under present conditions does not automatically wipe out the danger of war, but on the other hand places new emphasis on the need for and the possibility for cooperation on the part of all workers' organizations in defense of peace. Without question, our renewed emphasis—now also adopted by the world Communist movement—on a peaceful and constitutional road to socialism, removes one of the major differences of the past. Our Party's new approach to civil liberties now, and our pledge to preserve and extend the Bill of Rights under socialism should remove one of the major barriers towards cooperation with those so-

(Continued on Page 5)

SMITH ACT VICTIMS AMONG CP DELEGATES NUMBER 50

Fifty of the three hundred delegates to the 16th national convention of the Communist Party are past or present defendants under the Smith Act, it was announced from the convention platform. A total of 160 persons in the United States and Puerto Rico have been indicted under the Smith Act since 1948.

In the last 5 years thirty men and women have served or are serving Smith Act prison terms of from one to five years. Four of these are serving seven and eight year terms. Ten are still in prison today.

Seventy more have been convicted and their future freedom depends upon Appeals Court decisions. Twenty-one more are awaiting court trials.

A total of 35 cases under the Smith Act have taken place. One hundred and sixty people have been indicted, 114 have been convicted, 10 acquitted, 5 severed, 2 died, 11 in prison yet, and 18 have served their sentences.

Assistance to Smith Act prisoners who are still in jail and their wives and children is afforded by the Smith Act Families Committee, 575 Avenue of the Americas, Room 805, New York 11.

Speaking on the subject, former City Councilman Benjamin J. Davis, told the convention:

"One of the most heroic chapters of Party's life the way it stood, like an oak against the storms of McCarthyism, war hysteria and persecution:

"There are no greater symbols of this heroism than the list of our comrades who are Smith Act victims now in prison. The names of

understood this question, and its far-reaching significance. In this respect, the wives have set our whole Party an example.

"We cannot heed their example until we wage a pitiless struggle against bureaucracy, until we restore to its rightful place in our Party that human warmth which is the essence of Marxism-Leninism and which is one of the finest traits of the American people.

"No Communist Party is worth its salt if it does not fight for its own leaders.

"The central challenge before us is the case of Bob Thompson. He first miraculously escaped death when his skull was broken by a fascist-minded criminal, whose mind was crazed by the war hysteria by the sanctimonious peace-lovers in Washington. Twice since, he has undergone operations, under prison conditions, either one of which could have meant his life. Despite everything, he is now recovering. Perhaps these Communists do have an extra life or so.

"We must free Bob Thompson. We can free Bob Thompson. With the know-how of our comrades, were our Party in its full fighting trim, we would do so almost by the snap of a finger. We can do so now if we cut through the fog of timidity, self-flagellation and downheartedness that tend to sap our self-confidence. We have played a major role in having freed frame-up victims where there was no world socialist system, when Asia and Africa were quiet. Can we not do so today when the growth of socialist ideas in the world is one of the main reasons that compel

Communists' Attitude To Social Democracy

(Continued from Page 4)

cialists who really strive to achieve democratic socialism.

Our position on the possibility of socialism being achieved through the cooperation of a number of workers' and other democratic people's parties, as well as the continuance of a multi-party system under socialism, so long as the people desire this, is another major step in the direction of cooperation of all Marxist and socialist-oriented forces NOW and towards the ultimate creation of a broader united Marxist party. Our abandonment of an idealistic, uncritical attitude towards the lands of socialism, for one of a more mature and critical support of their socialist achievement and contribution to world peace and the strengthening of the world labor movement, should greatly strengthen our Party's ability to promote true internationalism generally and win support for a better understanding of the socialist world among the socialist-minded workers.

COOPERATION DESPITE DIFFERENCES — The ideological differences that divide the Social Democrats from the Communists remain fundamental and numerous. Here we refer not to certain groupings like the Nenni Socialists in Italy, such as G. D. H. Cole in Britain, or some like those grouped around the Labor Monthly here. We refer to the official Social Democratic movement, its main leaders in such countries as Britain, France, West Germany, etc.,

and those in the U.S.A. who occupy the same political spectrum. And we limit ourselves to ideological differences and do not speak of such obvious differences as those of the policies of the French Socialists (now the government party) in Algeria or Egypt, or similar differences with Social Democrats in our country.

These differences include their rejection in whole or in part of dialectical and historical materialism; their adherence to class collaboration as against the class struggle; their rejection in practice of internationalism, exemplified, among other things, in the negative attitude to the USSR and the other socialist lands; differences exist on such important matters as the national and agrarian questions, colonialism, imperialist war, the role of the working class, the role of the Marxist party of the working class and the allies of the working class.

Among those who still formally adhere to the aim of socialism, it is conceived as the end product of a series of capitalist reforms and not as a radical transformation of society, and hence our differences with them is not merely one of how socialism is to be achieved. And on this question too, our conception of the peaceful and constitutional road to socialism is not identical with the classic "parliamentary road" put forward by the Social Democrats and which has as yet nowhere led to the establishment of socialism.

In our conception the struggles of the people, the role of the

workers and their allies is a basic factor at every stage of the struggle to achieve the radical reorganization of society, in creating the conditions for the people's parliamentary victory, for carrying out of the people's will. All this shows that while we have much in common with Social Democracy and it's must be emphasized, many fundamental differences remain.

Our new approach however, is not based on these differences. It is dictated by new possibilities and paramount needs, despite these differences. While we should develop the most thorough and friendly discussion on all questions, including ideological differences, trying to find basic agreement where and with whom we can, it is on the basis of the vital issues now confronting the workers and their allies that we must strive to find the basis for unity. In this way life itself will contribute towards dissolving or resolving many differences which discussion alone will not achieve. And even where differences remain, we must learn to disagree in a new way. We must not take the position that we have all the answers and have nothing to learn. This includes all questions, theoretical, political and organizational.

We should look upon the Social Democratic organizations, including their elected leaders as workers' organizations. We must deal with these organizations, fraternally, and not as enemies. **WE STRIVE FOR THEIR COOPERATION, NOT LIQUIDATION.**