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UNITED FRONT FOR GASTONIA

Fight the Frame-up! Defend the Right to Organize and Strike!

The change of venue and the delay in the trial of the Gastonia strikers is a slight advantage for the defense of which the most should be made. It offers a breathing space in the preparation and organization of the defense movement, provides a little more time to rally a broader and more powerful movement and to correct errors in the defense tactics. All this is important and valuable, for a defense movement before a trial has ten times more significance than after conviction. This is the lesson of all great labor cases from Moyer and Haywood to Sacco and Vanzetti.

The change of venue also has a value in the removal of the trial from the lynching atmosphere systematically worked up against the prisoners in Gaston County. But this should not be the occasion for illusions. The capitalist courts remain what they were—instruments of capitalist frame-up justice—and the optimistic predictions of a "fair trial" by the Civil Liberties Union have to be rejected out of hand because they tend to disarm the workers in a bitter life and death class fight. To condemn this attitude it is not necessary to represent the change of venue and the delay as a blow at the defense. This is merely irresponsible foolishness, since the defense fought for this decision. Fundamentally the case stands where it stood before, with the class relations and the main issues the same and with a slight improvement in the position of the defense.

The Gastonia case is a labor case, and a case of the classic frame-up of the workers. The right to organize and strike and the fight against the frame-up system are the real issues involved. All the evidence shows that the police, militia and thugs of the mill owners were the instigators of violence against the workers. There is no proof that the fatal shots were fired by the strikers. No one has been so identified, no one has admitted such responsibility and it is certain that no such proof can be brought against the strike leaders. The case thus has all the characteristics of a typical labor frame-up.

The whole nature of the case indicates the rallying slogans of the defense movement:

Fight the Frame-up!

Safeguard the workers' right to organize and strike!

Slogans are the guiding line for action and it is of the utmost importance that they be formulated correctly. In our opinion it is not correct to make "the right of self defense" the central slogan of the campaign. An entirely different set of circumstances would be necessary for this. Such a leading slogan would apply only if the actual responsibility for the fatal shooting were clearly established and assumed by the defendants. This is not the case, and in the absence of these conditions it is false to put this slogan as the guiding line of the campaign. It tends to narrow down the movement of defense and it assumes a revolutionary atmosphere and class development which does not exist. It sounds "radical", but being false and unrealistic it does not serve radical ends.

The fundamental interests of the working class are at stake in the Gastonia trial as they were in the time of Moyer and Haywood, Ettor and Giovanitti, Mooney and Billings, Centralia and Sacco and Vanzetti. The nature of the case and the interests of the working class and of the prisoners call for a broad united front movement of defense. This idea must be the central strategy of the campaign.

United front movements do not spring out of the ground. They must be organized. How is it to be organized in this case—exclusively from below? No, this is a wrong approach. The united front from below alone follows only from the failure to secure any cooperation from leading elements in non-Communist organizations, after a conscientious attempt has been made, and after refusal of the leaders to cooperate in a united action has been definitely established before the workers belonging to and following the other organizations. It cannot be said that such is the case now in regard to Gastonia because the attempt has not been made.

On the other hand, numerous organizations in the working class movement—I. W. W., the new progressive movement, numerous unions, S. P., Anarchists, S. L. P., etc.—have issued declarations of support for

the Gastonia defendants. As matters stand now those elements in these organizations who really want to help, and there are no doubt many of them, are not organized and those who are not sincere in their declarations are furnished with a good excuse for doing nothing. The right move by the International Labor Defense which is in charge of the defense can straighten out the situation, mobilize those who want to help and show up those who do not.

The I. L. D. should make formal proposals to all organizations in the working class movement for united action regardless of political differences. Along with such formal proposals to the official leadership of the various organizations there should be a public appeal to all workers to cooperate in a genuine united front movement. The organization machinery for the united front movement should be "United Front Gastonia Defense Conferences" patterned on the Sacco-Vanzetti Conferences, the Passaic Strike Conferences and the old Moyer-Haywood Conferences, all of which followed the same line. It is false to attempt to form these conferences as direct adjuncts of the I. L. D. This procedure, as experience has already shown, attracts only organizations under the direct influence of the Party, thrusts aside all elements at war with the Communists and leaves the conservative workers untouched. Under the present conditions a really broad and powerful movement cannot be organized on this line.

The Gastonia case is a matter of desperate seriousness for the entire labor movement. Workers' lives and basic working class rights are at stake. Such issues cannot be a factional monopoly or plaything, factionalism has no place in such great issues of the

class struggle. Faction interests are alien and hostile to the interests of the case.

The Communist League of America, in common with all class conscious elements in the labor movement, wants to take part in a united movement for the defense of Gastonia. If we have resorted to criticism of the management of the case it is only because the management has thus far failed to lead in the direction of a united movement, because it has violated the basic lines necessary for the organization of such a movement, because it has followed a sectarian policy inimical to the interests of the workers' fight for the Gastonia prisoners, because it has pushed aside the cooperation of those who want to help. The rejection of the delegates of the Communist League of America at the Chicago Conference of the I. L. D. is a case in point—an example of criminal factionalism for which we know no precedent in American labor history. The failure to reply to the letter of the I. W. W. of July 18th offering cooperation, as printed in "Solidarity" for August 14th, likewise deserves the strongest condemnation. The Communists rightly criticized the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee for its narrow policy, but this committee never made the mistake of directly refusing the cooperation of any group.

We repeat again the sentiment of all class conscious workers: Organize all progressive forces in the labor movement—and all honest sympathizing elements—into a single united movement for the defeat of the Gastonia frame-up and the defense of the workers' right to organize and strike.

National Committee

The Communist League of America (Opposition)

Danger Signals in the East

A certain sharpening of the situation is evident in the present dispute between the Soviet Union and the Chinese counter-revolution around the question of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Troop mobilizations on both sides of the Manchurian border are being increased. Shots have been exchanged by contending patrols, in which a number of Red Army soldiers were killed. The opposing forces consisted for the most part of White Guard Russians who are operating against the Soviets with the covert support of Chiang Kai-Shek and Co. The Chinese reactionaries, and the White Guards in particular, are working hard to involve Russia in a war that may have tremendous consequences.

Nevertheless, the main indications point to the unlikelihood of a serious war situation developing. The imperialist press, and the imperialist powers, while they jockey for more advantageous positions in the dispute, give no direct support to the action of the Chinese. Russia has been maneuvered into the unfortunate position where it is defending its economic claims to property located on foreign soil and to the inviolability of treaty rights. This is a dangerous position for the Workers' Republic.

The imperialists are opposed to China's seizure of the railway because it strengthens the precedents for similar actions against the concessions and extra-territoriality "rights" of Japan, England, France and the United States. The imperialists want to use Russia's present attitude to justify their hold upon the economic and financial resources of China, and rob the Soviet Union (and the revolutionary movement as a whole) of the moral basis for protesting against these holdings.

Every worker will have as his first duty to lend every ounce of support to the Soviet Union to defend it from intervention and attack. But Russia will not find it possible to arouse the sentiments of the workers of the world to fight for Russian economic claims outside of the Soviet Union, on foreign soil. The fact that the railway was built by Russian (czarist) money, or that Russian participation was guaranteed in a treaty with the reactionary and defunct government of Chang Tso Lin, or that the railway is necessary for Russian transports to Vladivostock, are not valid arguments for a revolutionary workers' government.

From the proletarian point of view, Russia has as little claim to the railway as Chiang Kai-Shek; it belongs to the workers and peasants of China who will justly claim it when they come to power. Unless this is stated frankly and openly we should be deceiving and misleading the workers.

We are opposed to the atmosphere in which the dispute is being conducted by Stalin. It is the atmosphere of bourgeois diplomacy, in which the existence of negotiations (that were actually carried on between Russia and China for a time) are denied. It has nothing in common with the exemplary conduct of the Bolsheviks at Brest-Litovsk in 1918, charged with the internationalist spirit of Lenin and Trotsky. In 1918, the open and frank appeals of the Bolsheviks really led to the defeat of the German Junkers and the beginning of the German revolution. Stalin's present policy in China will never yield such a harvest. The Chinese proletariat and peasantry cannot and will not be rallied to overthrow the counter-revolution, to support the Soviet Union, to the standard of socialism by appealing to them to fight for Russian economic claims in China.

Neither is it correct to say that the main danger of war now exists in an attack on the Soviet Union by imperialism. The main danger of war today exists primarily in the growing intensity of the conflicts between British and American imperialism. The chief danger to the dictatorship of the proletariat lies in the steady penetration of Russian economic life by imperialist concessionaries, the growing strength and influence of the Kulak, the Nepman and the state bureaucracy, of the Thermidorian and counter-revolutionary elements in the country. That is what threatens the Russian revolution most acutely today.

The Stalinist press has nothing to say in answer to our viewpoint than to foully accuse the Opposition of being "allies of Chang Kai-Shek". This will deceive no one. When the Opposition was demanding a break with Chiang Kai-Shek as an enemy of the revolution in China and Russia, when Chiang Kai-Shek was strangling the Chinese working class and peasantry and beginning to drown it in a sea of blood, it was Stalin and Bucharin who maintained a most intimate alliance with him, who glorified him as the "revolution-

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All Quiet on the Unity Front

From a very well informed Party source we learn the following information about contemplated changes within the organization as the various little groups of Stalinists (all of them united, you understand) continue to jockey for position:

Robert Minor is to remain nominal editor of the Daily Worker, for the time being, with the threat that the redoubtable Harry M. Wicks, may take his place. Earl Browder, however, has the thankless task of being "politically in charge", i.e., of commissaring Minor. Franklin, who is more than suspected of having sympathies for Lovestone, is to be replaced as business manager by Wagenknecht.

I. L. D. REORGANIZED AGAIN

The I.L.D. has been re-organized for the third time in nine months since the removal of Cannon, Abern and Shachtman for their support to the Leninist Opposition. The Wagenknecht-Tallentire administration had a swift collapse; it was followed by the Poyntz-Hacker combination which reached its high point of efficiency in a struggle between the two as to who would sign the checks. Now J. Louis Engdahl is to be made national secretary and he is sure to bring enough of his inherent bombast into the organization to put the finishing touches to the work. A. Jakira, who was so phenomenally successful in reducing the Pittsburgh District Party membership to a shadow of what it was before he became district organizer there, is rewarded for jumping off the Lovestone bandwagon in time by being made national organizational secretary of the I.L.D. George Maurer, who is one of the original faithful, becomes editor of the Labor Defender. The I.L.D.—in view of the "Third Period"—has become very revolutionary lately. It thunderously condemns the Civil Liberties Union, the I.W.W., the A.F. of L., the Socialist Party, Mooney, the Centralia prisoners with equal courage. It also gives its unqualified endorsement to the Communist Party, the Trade Union Unity Congress. The I.L.D. has become very radical.

In Pittsburgh, Pat Toohy has resigned as national secretary of the National Miners Union, evidently in accordance with the views of Lovestone whom he supports. The other proletarian fig-leaf of the Lovestone faction, William White, didn't get a chance to resign. He has been replaced as I.L.D. secretary in Pittsburgh by one of the graduates from the so-called Lenin School, Max Salzman, whose diploma was found to be duly signed and sealed by Stalin. Pat Devine has been changed from District Organizer in Minneapolis to the same position in Pittsburgh. In the meantime, the Minnesota proletariat palpitates in anguished anxiety over the selection of its next leader. Devine's solitary contribution to Communist work in the Twin Cities was his expulsion of the most able and experienced Communists from the Party for their views on the Opposition. There is no written record of any other accomplishment by him.

Unity has also been established in the T.U.E.L. John Williamson has been made assistant national secretary. His former minority group association has been balanced off by making the former majority group member, Karl Reeve, editor of Labor Unity. This anaemic sheet, starved for the last few months by its sterile editor, Hathaway, is now doomed in the name of unity to suffer the really pitiful fate of falling into the hands of so eminent an incompetent as Reeve. The patriarchal Ballam, who is distinguished from Reeve only by his age, has been made representative to the R.I.L.U. This pension was awarded him for his successful jump from the Lovestone camp to the C. I. band-wagon in the nick of time. Nevertheless, he goes "across" only by default: Foster failed to make the necessary fight for a more deserving toiler.

CHICAGO GETS A GRADUATE

Chicago is being blessed with the appointment of C. A. Hathaway as district organizer; he also waves his "Lenin School" diploma on all occasions and his uniform is now an Open Sesame. He replaces William Kruse, who cast his lot with Lovestone and was removed. Kruse recently distinguished himself by proposing that the Chicago proletariat give up capturing the streets on International Red Day, and capture the woods instead by attending a picnic on August 1st. Sam Don has been offered the post of organization secretary in Chicago, but at the moment of going to press, he has not yet made up his mind whether the "Center" will be able to get along well enough without him in New York.

In New York, Benjamin has been removed as head of the Workers School and Agit-Prop director for supporting Lovestone. His place has been taken by Sam Darcy, who can write as dull and windy a thesis as any of them. Gusakoff has been yanked out of his New Jersey organizership for the same reason, and his place taken by the obedient Nat Kaplan, who all but captured the carmen's strike the first day of his job. Here, as in the case of most of the changes, it is substituting Tweedledum for Tweedledee.

Stachel, who is a cheap edition of Lovestone, has replaced Minor on the Political Committee, since the C.I. representative doesn't think much of the latter! No one knows who is the secretary of the Party, and not many care. The fact of the matter is, of course,

The Aftermath of 'Red Day'

The international "Red Day" demonstrations organized by the Communist International on August 1st were precisely what the Opposition foretold they would be: artificially inflated actions that only demonstrated the growing weakness of the official Communist Parties and their tremendous loss of influence upon the workers. In some places this was proved more strikingly than in others, but everywhere the Parties failed by miles even to approach the aims originally set by the organizers of "Red Day". The Stalinists succeeded more in exposing their own weakness and internal collapse than they did in exposing the growing danger of imperialist war. The net result of the affair is another set-back for the Communist movement.

These sad facts cannot be covered up, even if the official Party press were to misrepresent the situation twice as much as they have been doing. The policy of falsehood and self-delusion serve only temporary ends, and even those are of an injurious nature to the working class movement. Therefore the facts must be recapitulated here so that a proper evaluation of the August 1st demonstration can be made.

THE MASSES AND "RED DAY"

In no country (outside of the Soviet Union, of course) did the workers "take possession of the streets". Either they held their meetings without any appreciable interference by the police, as in Berlin's Lustgarten, or, where the authorities were determined that no meetings were to be held, as in Paris, no meetings were held—unless the scattered, disorganized and futile turnout of a few hundred or more workers can be entitled a demonstration. Most depressing is the fact that where the police proceeded with particular violence and arbitrary measures against the demonstrations, as in Czechoslovakia, China, France or Finland, the Communist Parties showed themselves entirely incapable of arousing the masses of the workers to fight back. In such instances, the Communists and their very closest sympathizers fought alone. The *working class masses* did not rally to them. Under the best of conditions, the demonstrations were attended by no greater number of workers than are to be found at the average mass meeting held during some regular campaign of the Party. In such countries as England, the "demonstrations" were a series of miserable debacles.

In the United States, the "huge demonstrations" existed largely in the columns of the Daily Worker, which has over again justified the view current in the International that it is the worst and most unreliable Communist paper in existence. It did not even have enough sense to lie with consistency. For example, the New York demonstration, attended by 5,000 to 6,000 workers, was reported in huge headlines: "20,000 NEW YORK WORKERS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR" (August 2). But the review of August 1st by Stachel (August 12) says: "New York City—Main demonstration about 12,000 workers." Forty percent cut off with a stroke of the pen! "MANY THOUSANDS MORE STRIKE" continued the Daily Workers headline on August 2, enlarging on this with: "The 20,000 who gathered in Union Square were only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of New York workers who at the call of the Communist Party of District 2, stopped work at 4 p. m. yesterday." Stachel, however, reports, 10 days later: "The partial information indicates that about 10,000 workers downed tools at 4 p. m." What fraction is 20,000—"only a small fraction"—of 10,000? "Philadelphia and Detroit held big demonstrations. . . San Francisco witnessed the biggest demonstrations in years," boasts the Daily Worker (August 3), but Stachel forgot this when he reports that "the Philadelphia, Detroit and California districts. . . did not organize mass street demonstrations". One day (August 2) the Daily Worker said: "200,000 DEMONSTRATE IN BERLIN" and on the very next day (August 3) its headline says: "140,000 MEET IN BERLIN"! What are sixty thousands here and there to these fearless leaders who have taken possession of the streets! As a matter of fact the recently arrived Berlin papers show that only 30,000 attended!

THE PHRASEMONGERS RANT

And the streets were not only things that were taken possession of. In New York, according to Darcy, (Daily Worker, August 10), "several hundred of the demonstrators marched to the headquarters of the socialist party (and) took possession of the front steps (!) of the socialist party building, the Rand School".

that the C.I. Commission is holding the Party in receivership; the Polcom members are too timid, loyal, obedient and Bolshevized to do anything but cry "Ditto" to anything that "George Williams" hands down from Mt. Sinai. The Almighty Williams has finally decided that a Plenum of the Central Committee can be risked in about 4 weeks, when the Polcom and the Secretariat will be re-organized again and unity established more firmly than ever before. . . .

What else but unvarnished idiocy can we call such pathetic dilettantism, as well as similar nonsense about "our comrades' guerrilla warfare with the police", the "armed camp in Chicago" or "shock troops". We will not speak here of the romanticism of the "unformed young worker guards". A Martian reader of the Party press would become seriously convinced that we stand before volcanic revolutionary convulsions in the United States, which the Party is prevented from taking proper advantage of solely because of "defeatists and counter-revolutionists".

We proposed that the demonstration be called off. Our estimate was proved correct. It had nothing in common with "defeatism". It is often necessary for the workers to retreat, either because of the immaturity of the situation or lack of revolutionary preparation. Lack of preparation there was a plenty. One has only to read the speeches at the 10th Plenum of the Executive of the Comintern for crushing evidence of that. Read the speeches of the reporter, Barbe, on "International Red Day"; read the speeches of Horner, Semard, Gottwald, Hansen, Jaquemotte, Platnitsky and Bell. From them you will get a fairly clear picture of the utter lack of preparation by the various Parties of the C. I. for the "Red Day", the absence of any enthusiastic response in the ranks, the universal indifference of the workers as a whole, the absence of any conviction, the depressiveness of the general atmosphere. Then compare their speeches with the light-headed vapors of one Bewer, of the E. C. C. I., (who is this new mentor of Bolshevism, by the way?): "The excavators (of Paris) managed to break through the police cordon and to demonstrate, true, in torn shirts, true, covered with blood, with great enthusiasm through the boulevards of Paris. Such must be the line of the Comintern." With the Communist Parties weaker, less influential, more torn by dissension, more misled and less capable of the talking advantage of a revolutionary situation than at any other time in the last six years, we are condemned as "defeatists" for refusing to fall into line with such phrase-mongering extravaganzas.

Where in Europe the slogans and actions of the Parties were tragic, in the United States they assumed certain aspects of infantilism. After three damaging defeats for the Communist Party and the left wing in New York—in the cloakmakers', furriers' and iron workers' strikes—the Party goes blithely ahead with a call for a general strike on August 1st! The fact that this slogan meant nothing, that not even a sizable minority of the workers heeded it (Stachel says apologetically: "The mobilization of the Needle Trades Industrial Union was not very successful"), does not disturb these irresponsible dabblers in revolution. Nor do they worry a bit about the fact that the serious and significant slogan of general strike becomes dangerously discredited among the workers when it is played with so lightly and unwarrantedly. Never mind; the "Third Period" is broad enough to cover all sins. The debacle of "Red Day" was not the first sin of the Stalinists and it will not be their last.

A Stalinist Provocation

A NEW WEAPON AGAINST THE OPPOSITION—

In the early part of this year, comrade Ugo Girone, a member of the Italian Communist Party, and a refugee from Fascism in France received permission from the Central Committee of the Party to return to Italy so as to bring back his wife. After arriving in Italy, Mussolini's bloodhounds suddenly arrested him in Milan, whence he was transported to Rome for trial. In the meantime, the Party Committee had discovered that comrade Girone is a member of the Central Committee of the Left fraction of the Party (Bordiga group). While he was still in the hands of the Fascist murderers in Rome, the Italian Party press in France and Belgium, as well as the Italian Party organ in New York, *Il Lavoratore*, published official articles denouncing comrade Girone, declaring publicly that he had gone to Italy secretly to do work for the Opposition among the Party comrades, telling his name, that he was a professor of Avelino, and insisting that he was an Italian citizen, and not as Girone claimed, a citizen of the Argentine Republic. This infamous denunciation, the work of provocateurs or Centrists gone mad, was just what Mussolini was looking for. Fortunately, comrade Girone was able to prove his Argentine citizenship, and the Fascists were unable to dig up clear evidence that he had engaged in seditious work. Girone is now in France again.