

# AT THE FRONT



— By —

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The news of the amazing change in Communist tactics which comes from the Congress of the Third International in Moscow is scarcely surprising to those who have followed recent developments in Russia and elsewhere. It is nevertheless one of the most startling things in political history. It would be hard to imagine a more complete change in position since the former Congress of the Third International many years ago.

How different might history have been in Germany and elsewhere if the Communists in good faith had announced their willingness to form a united front with working-class democratic parties to say nothing of the bourgeois parties which they now include in their grand alliance against Fascism. How many labor unions and political parties throughout the world have been hopelessly divided by a program which Communism now thoroughly repudiates, at least on paper. But we shall not dwell too much in the past when the present is so fraught with danger of Fascist action which as proper united

front might help to prevent—as indeed it has in France. Let us then examine the present Communist position under several heads:

## War

Apparently the Communists have gone over wholeheartedly to the position that there may be good wars between nations. This was precisely the position of the majority of Socialists in 1914, a position which the Communists have bitterly decried. It was, moreover, a position that was intellectually far more credible in 1914 than it is now after we have seen the lessons of the World War. There is no reason under the sun to think that international war will really be in any true sense anti-Fascist. Between capitalist nations it will be war for profit and power, and anti-Fascism will only be moral justification of it for popular consumption. If France or Great Britain, for instance, had meant to have a real anti-Fascist war, they and more especially Great Britain would not have dealt so amicably

with Hitler in the matter of armies and navies.

Just as the First World War, blessed by the majority of Socialists in every land except our own, did not destroy but spread imperialism, so would the second world war—and don't forget that any war is likely to go into a world war—blessed by official Communism in every land, be likely to spread Fascist reaction or dark night. Never was it more necessary for Socialists to insist that the Socialist hope against Fascism is not in the realm of international intrigue, much less in international war which requires class collaboration of the worst sort. It lies in building new forces—revolutionary forces—of workers with hand and brain in every country. It is well enough to put pressure upon government not to permit aid to go to Italian imperialist crusades in Africa or to express moral abhorrence against Hitler, but the doctrine of a good war is as bad Socialism as it ever was.

The old Communist belief in the inevitability of a second world war which would surely usher in a

world revolution of the right sort was naive and dangerous, but not more naive and dangerous than this new position. It is one thing to defend Soviet Russia, it is another to swing over to this announced willingness to support a good war which by definition is a war of defense against Fascism. What constitutes defense is open to too many varying interpretations. Never should Socialists be more intent on making their anti-war position plain. We fight Fascism by strengthening and educating labor.

## Democracy

The Communists have moved a long way on the right road since they were calling all Social Democrats Social-fascists. We have a right to ask of them evidence of good faith. Part of that evidence might well be in release of political prisoners in Russia, guilty of no overt act against the government, assurance that there will be no more wholesale terrorism such as followed the assassination of Kiroff and a relaxation of the rigorous restriction on freedom of speech and press in Russia. We

shall also want evidence of good faith in relation to the American labor movement and elsewhere. Under these conditions a really inclusive united front might be possible and desirable.

But well informed Socialists can never take part in a united front based on mere acceptance, sincere or insincere, of bourgeois democracy that has failed so many times as a weapon against Fascism. We do want to keep and increase all that is good in the democratic tradition. But we are realists and not romantics who recognize how, even under a professedly liberal New Deal Administration, taking America as a whole, true democracy and civil liberties have been losing ground. It will be an ironic and tragic paradox if the Communists officially swing away from a romantic proclamation of inevitable large scale violence and party dictatorship to a position which in practice will amount, at least temporarily, to the romantic parliamentarism of which (with some justice) they have previously accused right-wing Socialists of being guilty.